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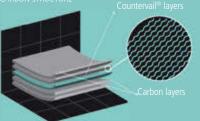
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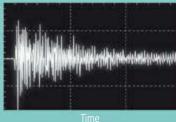


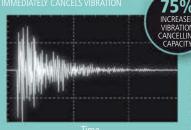












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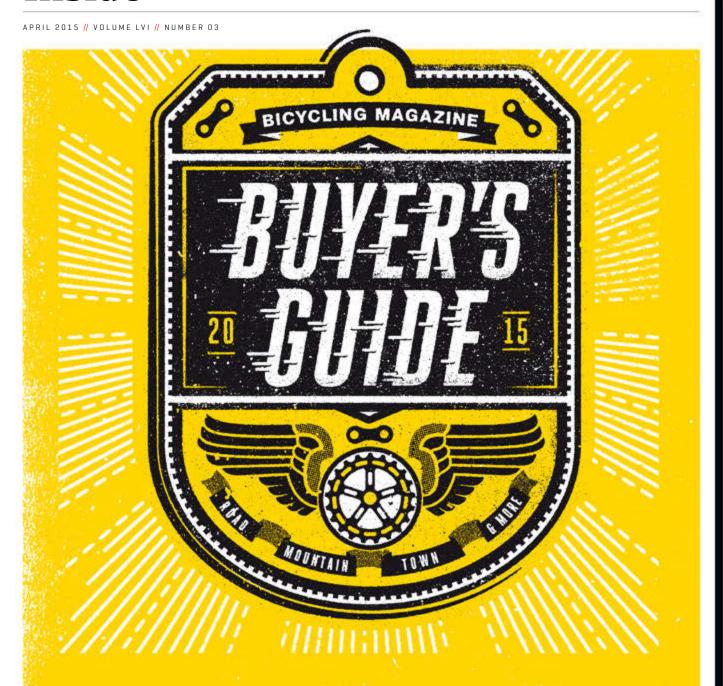








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GET READY TO DROOL, DREAM, AND MAYBE EVEN DROP SOME CASH ON AT LEAST ONE OF THE 30 MIND-BLOWING BIKES WE RODE AND REVIEWED. WE'VE NEVER BEEN MORE STOKED ABOUT A CROP OF NEW BIKES—AND WE PROMISE, YOU WILL BE TOO.

BY BICYCLING STAFF • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENT PELL • ILLUSTRATIONS BY TWO ARMS INC.



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Vile le Vélo!

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Louis Garneau, President and Founder



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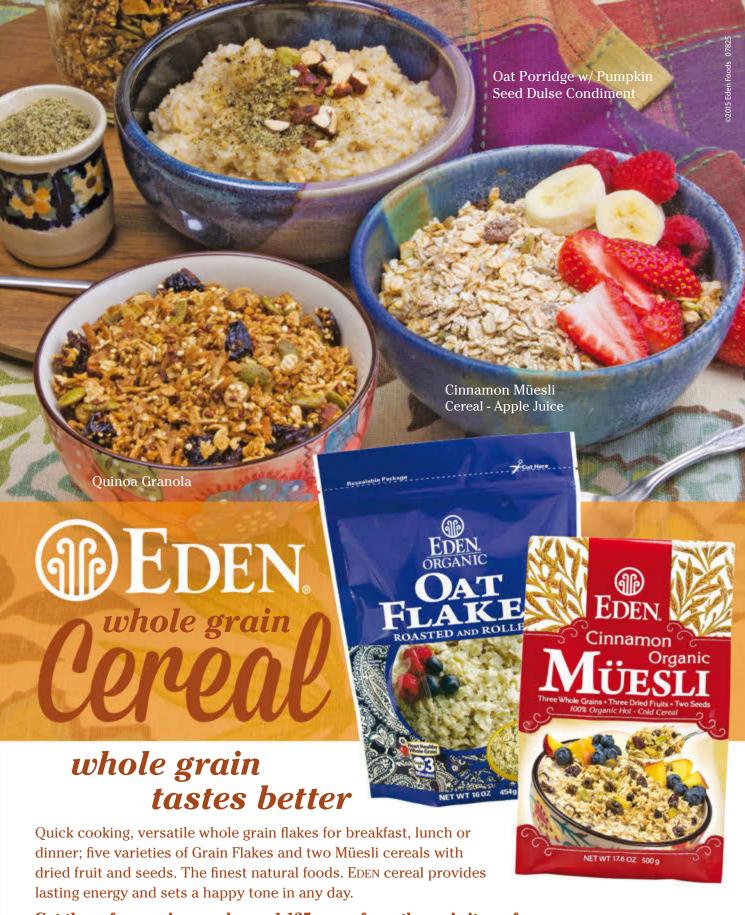
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Pinarello's RAZHA comes equipped with everything you need to jump in a criterium, grand fondo, or triathlon. Well suited for riders looking for their first carbon fiber race bike, the RAZHA utilizes layup methods and frame features derived from its, top of line Tour de France winning brethren. The results are stunning: superior performance, aggressive ready to race Italian geometry and a very attractive price.



Carbon: 24 Ton Uni-Directional Torayca Frame Features: "Think 2" Mechanical or Electronic Internal Cable Routing System Drive Train: Shimano 105 11 Speed Brakes: MOst B-Max Wheels: Shimano WH-R501 MSRP; \$2550 (Complete Bike Only)

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Carbon: 30 Ton Hi-Modulus Torayca Frame Features: "Think 2" Mechanical or Electronic Internal Cable Routing System Gruppo: Shimano Ultegra 1.1 Speed Wheels: Fulcrum Racing 5s MSRP: \$3850 (Complete Bike Only)

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Carbon: 30 Ton Hi-Modulus Torayca Frame Features: "Think 2" Mechanical or Electronic Internal Cable Routing System Gruppo: Shimano Ultegra 11 Speed Wheels: Fulcrum Racing 5s MSRP: \$3850 (Complete Bike Only).

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The Selection by BILL STRICKLAND

THIS MONTH'S TOP TIPS, BEST ADVICE, AND PERSONAL PICKS FROM OUR EDITOR





THE FIRST BUYER'S GUIDE I worked on, back in 1992, looked like this. At the time, there was no other way for people who were looking for a new bike to compare so much information on so many models, and those pages and pages of charts that look mind-numbing now were mind-blowing then. What those old issues had in minutiae, this one has in passion. Every bike in here matters, is beautiful in function and form, and either ranks as one of the best of its kind or else is fully representative of what you should demand of a similar offering from another brand. And every one made us whoop and laugh and dream like we were seven years old again. Sometimes even when we were just looking at them.

I was in a business meeting and someone asked, given the never-ending and rapidly increasing segmentation of the bicycle market, plus cycling's notorious reputation for elitism, how it was possible for BICYCLING to stake out an editorial position. I said it was easy. I said our position is this: Yay bikes! That's not overly

sophisticated, but it's a pretty good way to go through life.

Revelation I shouldn't keep having to have, but do: How much I love my own bikes has at least as much to do with their paint jobs as with how light or stiff or advanced they are.

DON'T WORRY:

Our charts are a relic of the pre-internet age, but we still want to help you comparison shop. Our free iPad bonus Buyer's Guide, available March 17, has photos and specs of lots more bikes, plus audio commentary from our test director, Matt Phillips, and our gear team. Go to BICYCLING .com/ipad and download the app.

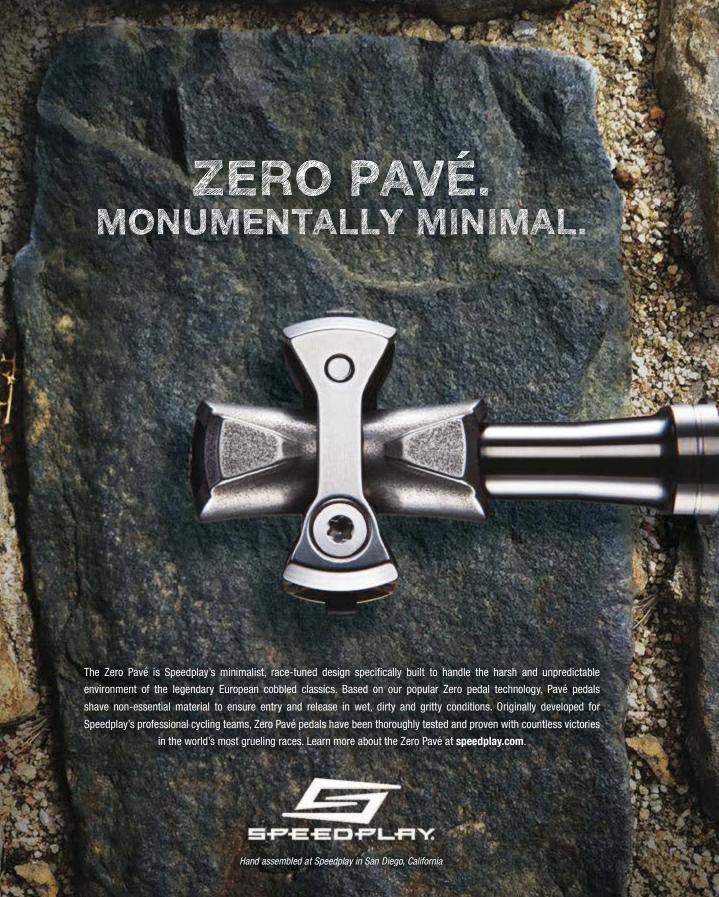


#MYNEWBICYCLE

Sometimes I hang at our local shop, South Mountain Cycle, just to watch

as someone gets a new bike. Delight and promise and pride and magic and so much more. I used to worry that I might lose out on the wonder by testing so many bikes. Nope: New-bike day is never not amazing. I bought a new one this spring, and—like all new-bike owners are—I'm dying to show it off. Look for it on March 3, hashtagged as #MyNewBicycle in the @BicyclingMag Twitter and Instagram feeds—and show me yours. We'll repost some of the best.

VOLVO Stories worth sharing rarely begin with "So ... we decided to stay in." Introducing the New Volvo V60 Cross Country. With a rugged exterior designed to brave the elements and a refined interior crafted to shelter you from them. As well as standard All-Wheel Drive, Hill Descent Control and Navigation. Your stories will practically write themselves. VOLVOCARS.COM/US TRISTAINA LAKES - ANDORRA - 7,400FT ABOVE SEA LEVEL





SATISFY YOUR NEED FOR ADVENTURE AND SPEED ON THESE INTREPID NEW ROAD BIKES.

25



ook at the BMC granfondo GFo1 Disc—then close your eyes and clear your mind. We have a tendency to categorize. And if you do that with this bike—if you label it a classics bike or an endurance bike or a fondo bike—you'll sell it short. It is not any one of those things because it is all of those things, and more. It is simply a versatile, comfortable road bike that fits the fat spot on the bell curve of "types of riding most people do." Further—and maybe most important—it's a hell of a lot of fun.

The GFo1 series began life as a project with the BMC Racing Team to give the riders an appropriate bike for the cobbled Classics. BMC-the-team's goal is to

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ FLAT-OUT FUN TO RIDE,
FAST OR SLOW → POWERFUL,
EASY-TO-USE SHIMANO HYDRAULIC
DISC BRAKES → CONVERTIBLE
CABLE ROUTING FOR MECHANICAL
OR ELECTRONIC SHIFTING → BIG, FAT
(BUT FAST!) TIRES → 18.5 LB (54CM)





win; BMC-the-bike-maker's job is to provide the team with performanceoriented machines to accomplish said goal. I mention this because that goal strongly influences the company's designs. And thus, my impression of most BMC road bikes has been that they are utilitarian instruments built with the systematic precision we stereotypically associate with most Swiss products. Where's the logic in building a fun bicycle?

And yet, the GFo1 Disc is exactly that. On one of my early rides, I pointed the bike onto a crusher-fines path

that weaves along a creek near my old condo. A small dip rises into a shallow right-hand bend; the tall head tube and stout front end fairly begged to boost a little air off the tree root at the apex. most spoken

language, by a

factor of three

over French.

Vergnügen

means "the

pleasure of,"

and *radsport* is

German for bike

racing. So *das*

radvergnügen

joy of cycling."

We think.

translates to "the

Farther on, a quick tap of the Shimano R785 hydraulic disc brakes produced a clean, rally-style flick of the rear wheel as I countersteered the bike into a tight corner. I stomped the pedals out of the exit. The bike stood up, driving forward. And so it goes—a little gas, a little brake and...das radvergnügnen*, you're shredding on a road bike.

That acceleration? It derives chiefly

from a bike's spine: the head tube, down

But the GFo1 is designed to improve comfort over long distances, too. The seatstays are flattened and join the seat tube a few inches below the top tube, so they can flex more under load. Both front and rear dropouts are cantilevered slightly away from the frame for a bit more cushion. And the bike comes with 28mm Continental Grand Sport Race

tube, bottom bracket, and chainstays. No surprise that the GFO1 is massive throughout: a 1.5-inch lower headset bearing, 86mm bottom-bracket shell, and a down tube like Popeye's forearm.

IT IS SIMPLY A VERSATILE, COMFORTABLE ROAD BIKE THAT FITS THE FAT SPOT ON THE BELL CURVE FOR "TYPES OF RIDING THAT MOST PEOPLE DO." FURTHER, IT'S A HELL OF A LOT OF FUN.

tires, voluptuous beauties that match the bike's personality. Sure, they plow some on looser dirt (they are road tires), but they're refreshingly grippy on most unpaved, hardpack surfaces.

The tires are hardly the only stellar component. Shimano's Ultegra group has long been my favorite for its blend of value and performance, and the new R785 hydraulic disc brakes are a masterpiece of function.

If there is a cost to all this technology, it's weight; our 54cm tester is 18.5 pounds. It's not a speedy climber, but thanks to a nearly 1:1 low-gear ratio that wouldn't be out of place on a mountain bike, it made sure-footed work of even steep gravel climbs.

On one of my last test rides I targeted Flagstaff Mountain, which rises about 2,200 feet above Boulder at an average grade of 7 percent. I am nowhere on the Strava leaderboard, nor was I looking to change that on the GFo1. Freed of the racer's ideal, I actually enjoyed the ascent itself. But the magic happened on the downhill. BMC strongly feels that discs are the future for road, and so it outfitted the entire GFo1 line with them; the transformation is revelatory.

When I arced into switchbacks, the discs scrubbed speed with such minimal effort at the lever that I could use a single finger. And the power: I have to drag rim brakes a little on the straight sections or I end up carrying too much speed just before the turn. But the superb modulation on these hydros meant I could brake harder, later, without the inefficient dragging. I'd come in hot—angry hot—and the pads would bite firmly on the rotors, the tires would dig their meaty contact patch into the tarmac, and I'd be carving corners as if on skis.

It didn't feel faster; the opposite, in fact. But I did actually go faster, and it felt more controlled compared with the hairy, sticksave sensations I sometimes get with rim brakes. As I rolled through the last corner, a thought crept into my mind: I need a burlier descent to test bikes on now.—Joe lindsey





So should you buy a disc-brake road bike? We think road discs are a superior technology and will be the standard in as soon as three years. Most people will enjoy the switch. For experienced cyclists, it will change your riding style and make downhills more fun. For more novice riders, the added control and power in allweather conditions will boost your confidence. Who might not want discs? Traditionalists, duh. But also experienced riders who are more comfortable with rim brakes. Or those who prize light weight.

Right now, most disc road bikes, like the GFo1, come with conventional quick-release axles. But most likely, thru-axles of some kind are coming to road bikes. They're a stiffer, more secure way to attach wheels to bikes and are better suited to the forces disc brakes put on wheels and frames. If you're concerned about downthe-road compatibility, wait until thru-axle standards settle in. If you'll be buying a new bike in a few years anyway, dive in.—J.L.



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the strongest cycling DNA I personally know of. (I confess I've never ridden the bikes of Richard Sachs, whom I understand also instills mad DNA, but in any case hasn't been making bikes as long, or in as many flavors.) I've owned two Colnagos: the Classics-conquering carbon fiber C40, which I bought in the '90s, and an aluminum Dream from the aughts; in certain ways that are at the core of the ride, both felt more like each other than like any other brands' bikes made with the same materials. I've savored that same, particular ride feel in every Colnago I've tested.

Save one: The V1-R we reviewed last year was the company's entry to the light-n-aero market, and while the bike was a worthy example of such a machine, it did not-mi dispiace immensamente, Ernesto-ride like a Colnago. It was a wonderful bike, but it was so much like so many other wonderful bikes and so little like a Colnago that I ended up not enjoying it.

No doubt I'm inhabiting a minority position here, and a largely unjustifiable one at that: If a bike is good, who should care whether or how much its ride relates to some artifact made decades ago?

Yet: I care. And I care so much that the C60—which does ride like a Colnago while also feeling contemporary—would be my pick if I could have any bike in this Buyer's Guide. The signature, starshaped carbon main tubes are joined with carbon lugs. My size 50 sloping test frame weighs more than 1,000 grams, which is relatively heavy compared with its competitors. But the weight is barely

100 PERCENT The C60 is the only carbon frame Colnago still makes in Italy. And it's fully made there, not just assembled from parts produced in Taiwan, China, or other countries.

noticeable, and beside the point, anyway. The bike has that fascinating, thrilling, contradictory blend of responsiveness and confidence that engenders a nonchalant, nearly laconic intensity—riding this bike is something like being the world's most skilled surgeon on the planet's wildest roller coaster wielding the sharpest scalpel ever made. And saving the patient. Every time. While occasionally sipping a ristretto. (But only after I swapped Campagnolo's lowprofile Shamal clinchers in place of the pure-racer's Bora Ultra Two tubulars, on which I felt like I couldn't stop reviewing the wheels instead of the whole bike.)

All that Colnagoaticism doesn't preclude modernity. Pacing current tech, the C60's tubes are thin, and massive, and asymmetric in spots, all to fine-tune the blend of stiffness and compliance. Colnago's own PressFit82.5 bottombracket system is compatible with the modern, superlight, and superstiff BB86 and BB386EVO cranks. The steerer tube is tapered. And my test frame was wired for Campagnolo's electronic Super Record EPS group.

You should care about this bike. And you should experience its ridebecause while there are plenty of bikes that outstrip the C60 in specific, lab-measureable ways as well as out on the road, there is no other bike I know of that can be considered, like this one, superlative in today's terms while preserving a direct and unbroken connection to the origin of something truly legendary. And also you should care because who knows how long this astounding and magical link between present and past will last: It could be that a Colnago will always be a Colnago, but it could also be that, based on the rarity of what he's accomplished, Ernesto knows something nobody else does.—BILL STRICKLAND















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've always had a hard time with the idea that the popular Specialized Ruby is basically a high-performance comfort bike—a workhorse designed to take the sting out of long, grueling miles. Given its name, it sounds like it should have a more refined role.

But bike names don't always make obvious sense and, after all, rubies are also known for extraordinary durability. I am also well aware that the Ruby is the women's version of Specialized's Roubaix (get it?), the bike that's launched some of cycling's hardest men to victory on the cobbles of Europe's spring Classics.

Key to the Roubaix's crowd-pleasing ride is the company's proven vibration-damping technology and frame construction, combined with race-worthy stiffness. Though the bikes in the Ruby line differ from the

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

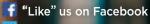
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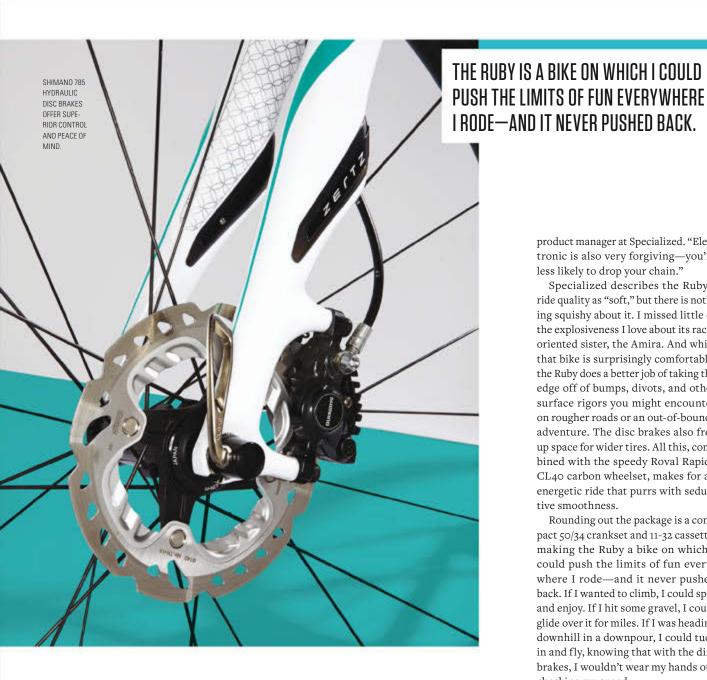
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product manager at Specialized. "Electronic is also very forgiving—you're less likely to drop your chain."

Specialized describes the Ruby's ride quality as "soft," but there is nothing squishy about it. I missed little of the explosiveness I love about its raceoriented sister, the Amira. And while that bike is surprisingly comfortable, the Ruby does a better job of taking the edge off of bumps, divots, and other surface rigors you might encounter on rougher roads or an out-of-bounds adventure. The disc brakes also free up space for wider tires. All this, combined with the speedy Roval Rapide CL40 carbon wheelset, makes for an energetic ride that purrs with seductive smoothness.

Rounding out the package is a compact 50/34 crankset and 11-32 cassette, making the Ruby a bike on which I could push the limits of fun everywhere I rode—and it never pushed back. If I wanted to climb, I could spin and enjoy. If I hit some gravel, I could glide over it for miles. If I was heading downhill in a downpour, I could tuck in and fly, knowing that with the disc brakes, I wouldn't wear my hands out checking my speed.

The next disc-equipped model down from my tester is the \$2,800 Elite Disc equipped with SRAM Rival. I would have liked to get a sense of what the \$4,000 difference feels like on the road; unfortunately, the Expert Disc was still in transit from the factory in Taiwan during our testing period. But I like the fact that you can get a bike with women's geometry, Specialized's long-ride frame technology, and hydraulic disc brakes for less than \$3,000. Whichever model you choose in the 2015 Ruby line, you'll get a do-it-all road machinewith the durability and polish of a gemstone.—LEAH FLICKINGER

Roubaix in geometry and components, they benefit from a lot of the same technology, including the rubbery Zertz dampers in the fork, seatstays, and seatpost that are claimed to absorb some road vibration before it shimmies up through the frame and drills into your body.

The Ruby has women's endurance geometry and components: a women's saddle, size-specific cranks, and a narrower handlebar with a shallower drop. For 2015, Specialized updated the Ruby with three disc-brake models, giving customers the option of more

effective—and all-weather—braking.

I tested the Ruby Pro Disc, a \$6,800 carbon showpiece one step below the top-of-the-line S-Works Ruby. It came fitted with Shimano's 785 hydraulic disc brakes and an Ultegra Di2 electronic drivetrain, which delivered fast, crisp shifts. Besides bling factor, Specialized sees another value in electronic drivetrains: They make changing gears easier. "A [mechanical shift] lever can be a deal breaker for some women, especially newer riders who might have difficulty shifting," explains Stephanie Kaplan, women's

COMFORTABLE ≠ SLOW

Specialized product manager and bike racer Stephanie Kaplan started riding a Ruby Pro Disc after her Amira was stolen-and hasn't gone back.

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light bike is a thing of beauty, but only if it's more than just feathery. Stiffness, handling, compliance, and functionality—a bike that excels in all these areas and is superlight is as sublime to ride as it is rare: In almost 20 years of testing, I've ridden only a few bikes that fit that description. More often, I've found hyperlight bikes to be interesting, but to embody some very real compromises to shed weight, too.

That's why, when Guru told me that its Photon HL frame is the lightest in the world, I wondered how much was sacrificed to achieve that superlative. I requested one to test, but I wasn't expecting to say much more than, "Gee willikers, it sure is light." The Photon HL ended up being so much more.

Guru is a 30-person operation based in Montreal, Québec. The company is one of a few bike makers that builds

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ CLAIMED TO BE THE LIGHTEST FRAME IN THE WORLD (AND PROBABLY IS), BUT IS NOT THE LIGHTEST FRAMESET IN THE WORLD → CUSTOM GEOMETRY → MADE IN CANADA → 13.1 LB AS TESTED (APPROX. 54CM)

custom bikes in-house with three materials—carbon, steel, and titanium. The original Photon (claimed frame weight 750 grams) won our Editors' Choice award for best dream road bike in 2010. According to Guru composite engineer Guillaume Cyr, the HL is more than 14 percent lighter than that version because the company was able to coax less material into accomplishing more. Engineers used computerized modeling to determine that they could remove up to half the material on certain layers of the Photon HL's frame and still preserve ride quality. They achieved this by cutting away strips on

almost every layer of the bike including the topmost—giving the Photon HL the appearance of having stripes.

Cutting strips in a computer is one thing, but when it comes to riding a bike, it's my own skin that's in danger of being stripped away, so I felt compelled to ask Guru marketing manager Jodi Clark if the bike was safe. She responded that the frame passes "various fatigue and impact tests which go above and beyond the industry standards," but noted that it does have a 200-pound rider weight limit. I'm safely below that, so Clark reassured me that I wouldn't need to take



precautions when riding the bike.

But is it the lightest frame in the world? That's a curious claim to make about a custom-only frame, since every Photon HL is different. The claimed weight is 650 grams for a 54cm frame with hardware (derailleur hanger, water-bottle bolts, and seatpost clamp). My frame, approximately a 54cm, weighed 677 grams, though it carries 10 grams of extra weight because it was built with a stiffer tube

set after the builders at Guru guessed I $\,$ was, "(most likely) a very strong rider." My frame weight also accounts for the additional cable-routing tubes required for a mechanical drivetrain (the cable stops are compatible with electronic, mechanical, and hydraulic systems).

Guru may make the lightest frame, but not the lightest frameset. The HL is equipped with an Enve 2.0 tapered fork, which has a claimed weight of 350g (my fork weighed 379 grams uncut) for a total claimed frameset weight of 1,000 grams. That's heavier than the claimed weight on Cervélo's \$10,000, 2015 RCA frameset, which is 950 grams for a size 54cm frameset with hardware. The RCA frameset is more expensive and not offered in custom geometry like the Photon HL, but apparently it is lighter. Regardless, the Photon HL is definitely one of the lightest frames you can buy, and probably the lightest frame I've ever

I also built it with light (but not the lightest) parts: Campagnolo's new Super Record mechanical group and Bora Ultra 35 tubular wheels; 23mm Vittoria Corsa SC tubulars; a cockpit from Bontrager, including the 245-gram (my scale) XXX integrated carbon bar and stem. Total weight without pedals or bottle cages: 13.1 pounds.

When I pointed it up the first climb, adjectives, similes, and metaphors about weightlessness started floating around in my brain like a thousand Ping-Pong balls in zero gravity. That, I believe, is really why people obsess about hyperlight bikes: You might not actually be that much faster going up a hill, but damn, you feel faster. Superhero fast. I finally settled on this: Climbing on this bike made me feel like SuperSpiderBatman.

I expected this effect. It's the Photon HL's other traits that I didn't anticipate.

It's as stiff a bike as I'd ever want or need-not the stiffest I've ever ridden, but I wouldn't want it if it were. I started riding the HL gingerly, then progressively pushed it harder. The bike was precise and provided enough feedback so that I could always predict its limits. I could fold myself into a tuck, sit on the top tube, and arc though corners at high speed without any wobbling. It felt stable even when I approached



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SOCIAL SENSATION

When I Tweeted a picture of the Photon HL from the Interbike trade show, it got more of a reaction than anything I've ever posted.

a sharp corner fast, braked late and hard, and flicked it into the turn. The bottom bracket and both triangles felt more solid than some heavier custom carbon bikes I've tried, and more robust than my custom steel frame.

And is it ever smooth. Beautifully smooth. I'd like to hand this bike to so many bike makers and say, "Like this. Make your bike ride like this." The Photon HL seemed to float, yet I felt connected to the road; it felt

suspended, but not isolated. Right, so much right.

What I wouldn't do with the Photon HL is race it in a criterium—the geometry on my bike leans toward stability anyway. Nor would I pack it in a box and hand it over to a shipping company or an airline: This is probably not a tough bike. It's stiff enough and strong enough—apparently—that I'd feel confident riding it on any road. But this is not a frame for the careless

or absentminded. This is the frame for someone who is willing to give the Photon HL a dedicated space where it can be stored without fear of it falling over or being fallen on; for someone who respects that this is possibly the world's lightest frame, and recognizes the compromise to durability that accompanies that mantle. Accept that, and the Photon HL should dazzle you the way it did me: that so little could be so much.—MATT PHILLIPS

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ou were cooking! We carved those last few turns so fast."

We'd just dropped down the last half of the descent of Mount Lemmon outside of Tucson, Arizona. The ride was part of our annual Editors' Choice trip, and now the group was sitting at a coffee shop under vine-wrapped vigas, bench racing, unwinding, enjoying a postride nosh, and contemplating the rest of the day's riding. I'd scored the Cannondale CAAD10 for the last five miles off the mountain. The climb up had been interesting while not mind-blowing in terms of what the bikes could do, but the blazing descent back to town really gave us a feel for the mettle of the machines. The CAAD10 was intuitive—an able dance partner as the road dropped and the turns linked together faster and sooner. Even through the high-speed saddle about halfway down, with a blazing-hot crosswind, the bike was a steady roller, staying on course.

The CAAD10 won that round in the Editors' Choice competition in one of my favorite categories: recreational road, a catchall term we use for jack-of-all-trades

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- → YOU MIGHT NOT BELIEVE IT'S ALUMINUM
- → TURNS ON A DIME AT SPEED → RACE-WORTHY
 BUT AFFORDABLE→ HAS BEEN A BICYCLING
- EDITORS' CHOICE WINNER → 16.1 LB (54CM)

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bikes, ones that offer fantastic rides and excellent handling with work-a-day pricing and components. These bikes offer great value, without being cheap in any way.

On that trip, the CAAD10 had done something else that was remarkable: It changed a few riders' perceptions of what an aluminum bike could be. All of the testers passed the bike off to the next with their own way of saying, "Holy mackerel, I can't believe this is aluminum." (The CAAD10 does have a carbon fork.) It upended the common belief that oversize aluminum is harsh, chattery, and stiff. The CAAD10 was and is refined and elegant, ushering in a new appreciation of the material.

The CAAD10 we loved in 2012 has been through a few updates since. For instance, it's now Di2-compatible, so the same frame can run mechanical (like on my tester) or electronic drivetrains. But it remains one of the best bargains around. The CAAD10 I tested is outfitted with SRAM Force 22 components, Cannondale's Hollowgram Si crank, and FSA Energy wheels. Yet the price jumped only \$800 over the SRAM Rival-equipped bike we tested in

DOUBLE-DUTY

Before Cannondale made bikes, it made touring gear like the plastic Baby Bugger trailerwhich also made a heck of a heer cooler. In '91, I towed a Bugger filled with frosty beverages for the full length of the Five Boro Tour in NYC.

Tucson. Taking into account inflation, the update to an 11-speed drivetrain, and better cranks, this CAAD10 is an even better value than the last.

The ride is top-notch: The CAAD10 smoothed rough pavement, cornered crisply, and transferred power efficiently. When I rode it on my home roads in eastern Pennsylvania—a patchwork of farm roads, rolling hills, and the valleys in between, with dirt and broken pavement galore—I was even more impressed with this version than the last. The massive front end provides a solid platform from which to launch a sprint. Cannondale's SAVE seatstays soak up chatter, keeping me fresh rather than letting road imperfections beat me to hell.

I like to hand my test bikes around for feedback from different riders. In this instance, the CAAD10 found its way to a few of my most trusted evaluators, and also a relatively new rider looking for an entry into the sport. As on that Arizona trip, all of the testers responded favorably to the ride, likening it to higher-end models, including carbon offerings. The newbie said that he probably wouldn't have considered aluminum as an option, but is not ruling it out anymore. Weight-wise, there are no concessions: At 16.1 pounds for a 54cm, the CAAD10 is in the same realm as higher-priced bikes. And it's versatile enough to evolve with your riding style. To make it an all-rounder, there is clearance for 25mm tires; it can also serve as an affordable and durable race bike.

The CAAD10 is available in men's and women's geometries, and there are disc versions, too. Prices range from entry level to the blinged-out CAAD10 Black Inc. Disc at \$4,330. Whichever model you choose, be assured that you're getting a great ride and saving some serious dough.-MIKE YOZELL

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he abbreviation, PR, in this bike's name is an allusion to Paris-Roubaix. Felt developed this frame to be used in the 2007 edition of the cobbled, one-day race also known as the Hell of the North, and the bike landed on the podium that year. The F1 PR also shares a lot of features with the previous version of Felt's more thoroughbred road racer, the F1. This heritage, combined with several key changes, optimizes the F1 PR for the diverse rigors of the spring Classic races and make it a versatile companion for any kind of spirited riding you want to do, on any sort of road.

To help the frame perform well on brutal terrain, Felt relaxed its typical race geometry, slackening the headand seat-tube angles by a little more than one degree. (The exact amount differs from size to size.) Coupled with a slightly lengthened wheelbase and lowered bottom bracket, this is intended to improve stability when the bike hits bumps at speed on pocked or cobbled roads. These changes generally allow a rider to be more relaxed, saving energy-having to pay constant attention to the road surface and correct for every deflection can cause cyclists to tense their hands, arms, shoulders, and neck, leading to fatigue.





WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

→ PRO TOUR BIKE WITH MORE RELAXED GEOMETRY THAN FELT'S F1 RACE BIKE → COMES WITH 27MM TIRES, CAN FIT UP TO 33MM → SEATPOST FEATURES SPLINED SLEEVE AROUND THE CLAMP TO PREVENT THE SADDLE FROM SHIFTING OVER ROUGH ROADS → DOESN'T HAVE DISC BRAKES, TO MEET UCI RULES → 17.1 LB (54CM)

The technology and pedigree are impressive, but at BICYCLING we've learned that these qualities don't always fulfill a need that really ought to matter to amateur riders: fun. In this case, the mix works. Some of the characteristics that make the F1 PR a great bike for pros also made me want to launch off curbs, bunnyhop railroad tracks, and generally act like a kid who just ate five pounds of sugar. Gravel roads, dirt paths, sidewalks, and a towpath along a canal it all became my playground.

The bike rolls on sturdy, Mavic Ksyrium Elite S wheels shod with Challenge Paris-Roubaix open clinchers. The tires are a generous 27mm wide, and the frame can handle up to 33mm 'cross tires (though the F1 PR was not intended to race cyclocross).

Run the stock tires at 80 to 85 psi, and they'll romp through just about anything, allowing you to be a little more carefree and to follow the path less traveled. But when you ramp up the pressure, the bike's road-racing capability becomes more evident. Stomping

on the pedals out of the saddle yields a sharp acceleration—the frame and fork are decisive in translating movements. The bike responded to my steering predictably and with precision, so that I could maneuver deftly when tucked in a tight, jostling group.

At 17.1 pounds, the F1 PR isn't a featherweight, but that's not to be expected of a classics bike at this price—nor does it significantly harm the ride. The bike has a light feel, rocking easily beneath me on steep climbs.

The parts are solid: Shimano Ultegra cranks and mechanical levers; Dura-Ace derailleurs; TRP long-reach brakes; and a handlebar, stem, and vibration-damping seatpost from 3T. Put together, they make the F1 PR a good value that is also eminently raceable. Eschewing the superlight in favor of sturdier, more durable components makes a lot of sense for most riders, especially if you're going to get your money's worth out of this bike and use it for what it does best: have a blast on all sorts of gravel, dirt, and adventure rides.—BRAD FORD



The term refers to the European spring Classics, brutal one-day races that patch together dirt farm roads, narrows lanes, ancient Roman cobblestone streets, and modern pavement. Traditionally, a "classics" bike was basically a road-racing bike with durable, high-spoke-count wheels and wider tubular tires. That was when all bikes were pretty much the same in that they were made of steel tubing with steel lugs. Wheels and tires were key to surviving the punishment dished out by rugged courses.

The shift to carbon frames and aero shapes has caused tire clearances to diminish—in some cases 23mm tires are the largest that will fit certain frames. Wheels and tires remain key to a classics bike—tires still generally need to be 25 to 28mm to run lower pressures and mitigate hits and bumps, both for comfort and to avoid flats. But modern classics bikes also combine the best of carbon's damping capabilities along with clearance for wide tires (and any mud that gets flung around), with the performance characteristics of Pro Tour race bikes.—B.F.

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his could have been the most pointless bike review ever written, because Ritte is one of those brands that people either conceptually get and love, or else really, really don't. But two factors make your consideration of this bike worthwhile, beyond Ritte's reputation.

First—and most important—this thing is a blast to ride, and this noteworthy capability often gets overshadowed by Ritte's spirited marketing. It's like that with custom builder Dario Pegoretti; his paint jobs dominate any discussion to such an extent that I feel obligated to remind people who are admiring mine that the ride is phenomenal.

Second is that, as I showed the bike around, I realized that some people who don't like Ritte misunderstand what the company is about. The brand is so facile at the intersection of social media, cycling memes, and post-postmodern marketing that while it is actually anti-bro and anti-elitist, it can be mistaken for the thing it is mocking. For instance, Ritte's video campaign making fun of cycling's sexist exploitation of hot chicks exploits a hot chick. Meta is risky. (And, alas, there are

HAND-SHAPED

Canon, who has a sculpting background, designs all Ritte bikes in clay. Then a 3D-computer-modeling expert renders the sculpture into language that machines and engineers can use.

Spencer Canon, the founder of the company and designer of the bikes, explains it like this: "The loudest voices in our culture have a tendency to be extreme in one way or another, and, often, it's extreme in a negative way. Flat brim, the bro, the steroidal masters racer, the indie hipster fixed-gear rider—these tribes can become caricatures of themselves, and exclusionary of each other. Ritte is a response to that."

Ritte is just as committed as the Velominati to telling you how to ride—except they're genuinely funny about it, and also make fun of themselves for presuming they're the ones to tell anyone how to ride. "Cycling is a personal paradox for me," Canon says. "I've done it my whole life, it's something I now devote my life to, and yet I just don't see what can be taken so seriously about



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MADE WITH KVA MS3 STAINLESS STEEL → OVERSIZE, TAPERED HEAD TUBE → PF30 BOTTOM-BRACKET SHELL → SEVEN SIZES, FROM 52CM TO 58CM, PLUS "R-FIT" OPTION WITH SHORTER HEAD TUBE FOR MORE AGGRESSIVE RIDING POSITION → "TRUE LOVE DOESN"T RUST," SAYS RITTE → 17.9 LB (53CM)

something that's basically just an awesome, beautiful hobby. Ritte is a kind
of comfortable place where people can
do what they love doing, and practice
the things about cycling they appreciate, without any pressure to act or
look a certain way." I don't know how
much this sort of thinking helps a mass
audience decide which bike to buy, but
intent and story are important to me—
as long as the bike also rocks.

The Snob does. Like me, Canon adores steel bikes that aren't throwbacks but use modern tube sizes and geometries, and he feels that the pound or two of weight that the material gives up to carbon is no big deal compared with the ride quality gained. The newest, most cutting-edge carbon bikes, like the Pinarello F8, have a connectedness to the road that is unprecedented (and

amazing), but given my choice I'd take the absorptive but snappy feel of bikes like the Snob. Under hard braking, in can-I-make-it corners, during prolonged furious efforts in tight packs, and in topend sprints, the frame neither excessively deflects nor holds resolute so much as it yields then strikes like a Tai Chi master. It's a living ride. It has a heartbeat.

The stainless steel frame is made one per day by a small-batch build factory in China run by a Dutch family. Canon describes it as Ritte's "most-sought-after frame—the one we sell the quickest and have too few of." I'm glad few of you will be able to get one, even though I wish more people knew about it and other bikes like it, and appreciated these bikes and rode them. How's that for a post-postmodern bike review?—BILL STRICKLAND











or several years, the Pinarello Prince reigned supreme at the top of the storied Italian brand's line, winning this magazine's Editors' Choice award twice, eventually receiving a "Hall of Fame" designation. But in 2010, it was deposed by its successor, the Dogma 60.1.

But the Prince didn't stay banished for long. For 2015, Pinarello has restored this bike to a position of honor. In terms of the royal lineage, it is now third in line behind the Dogma 65.1 Think2 and the top-of-the-line Dogma F8. But while the F8 is a breed apart, the Prince and Dogma 65.1 share the same asymmetrical design—in fact, they come from the same mold.

Where they diverge is in their materials. The Prince has a different layup and a slightly lower-grade Toray carbon that doesn't have the nanoparticletoughened resin found on the Dogma 65.1. Pinarello also uses a distinct weave for the Prince in the top and cosmetic layers. This results in a bike that's slightly heavier and slightly less stiff than the Dogma 65.1, but still an improvement in terms of weight and stiffness over the PEDIGREE Bradlev Wiggins rode a Dogma 65.1 and a Dogma 2 in the 2012 Tour de France-and won the GC. The Prince comes from the same mold as the 65.1 and uses the same carbon as the 2.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ SAME MOLD AS THE DOGMA 65.1, DIFFERENT CARBON → SPIRITED, RACE-BRED RIDE → TRADITIONAL, AFFORDABLE (FOR PINARELLO) PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED BIKE → 16.5 LB (53CM)

2010-era Prince FP. It's also more affordable—\$1,500 less than the Dogma 65.1, \$700 less than the Prince of five years past-and 138 grams lighter than the Paris model it replaces.

This is a bike made for going hard; its race-bred heritage means it excels when you're pushing it. After a recent snowstorm, I piloted the Prince up a local dirt climb, perhaps a few days earlier than was advisable. The melt-refreeze cycle had left the steepest sections a mix of greasy mud and ice-no standing allowed. But I had no trouble driving power to the rear wheel while seated and grinding my way to the top.

The twisted pavement descent that followed was strewn with gravel that skittered like ball bearings under my front wheel. But the Prince managed it handily, with stable, comfortable steering. I should note that shorter or taller riders may have a different experience. Pinarello keeps a constant fork rake

across all sizes, but varies the head angles, so the bikes feature more trail and progressively more stable steering as sizes decrease, while the shrinking trail figure on bigger sizes will lead to a more responsive front end.

The Prince has a relatively comfortable ride for a race bike. It transmits some road buzz and jolts from broken pavement, but it's not overly harsh. And remember, it is not intended to go headto-head for comfort with the new class of endurance road bikes, which you might guess when noting that the only geometry change from the 2010 Prince FP is a head tube that's a half-centimeter shorter in almost every size.

Certainly Pinarello's top race model is the F8, a distinction based not so much on weight as on stiffness and aerodynamics. But what the Prince offers is a race-worthy frameset for nearly \$2,000 less. It may not be the king of Pinarello's line, but it's still royalty.—JOE LINDSEY



masses. The new Zero.9 shares the geometry of the Italian company's flagship Zero.7, but uses different tube shapes, profiles, and carbon layup to significantly reduce costs. In fact, at just under \$3,500, the Zero.9 as a complete bike costs less than the Zero.7 frameset. But the 9's frame was still able to capture a win for Eric Marcotte of Team

bike accessible to the

Smartstop at the 2014 US National Road Championships. (Marcotte's bike sported deep-section carbon wheels and a SRAM Red drivetrain.)

The Zero.9 is made of mid-modulus carbon instead of the more expensive material on the Zero.7. Although the handling characteristics are similar, the material differences, I think, result in a more aggressive road feel versus the subtly damped, nuanced ride on the Zero.7 (which I've also tested). That's not only a fair trade for a \$3,500 racing bike, but it also keeps it in line with the Zero.9's authentic, blue-collar character.

HOW DO YOU Say "Wilier"?

The name is pronounced VEE-lee-air, and is an acronym for the phrase, Viva l'Italia liberate e redenta—"Long live Italy, liberated and redeemed." (The "W" stands for a double "V" in Italian.)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ SHARES THE SAME GEOMETRY AS THE \$5,000 ZERO.7 FRAMESET → MONOCOQUE CARBON + NAME-BRAND
PARTS = KILLER VALUE → FAST ENOUGH TO WIN THE US NATIONAL ROAD CHAMPIONSHIPS → 17.3 LB (54CM)

From a performance perspective, the Zero.9 possesses the traits you want in a race machine. At 17.3 pounds, it wasn't the lightest bike in most any pack I tested it in, but it has a surprisingly light feel. I find a bike's weight to be most noticeable during hard efforts when I am already fatigued, either climbing out of the saddle or in the waning moments of a sprint or attack. But in those situations, the Zero.9 felt neutral, with neither its weight nor lightness commanding my attention. Additionally, it moves forward with workman-like efficiency in response to the energy expended at the pedals.

Through turns and on descents, I could pilot the Zero.9 with confidence. It tracked predictably and provided appropriate feedback when I was pushing my limits. The sensations from the

road surface seemed a little unfiltered, almost gritty, but again in an accurate and satisfying way that reflect the bike's personality, rather than detracted from my enjoyment of it.

The parts on the Zero.9 are straightup performers: Shimano RS21 wheels, a mechanical Ultegra drivetrain and brakes, FSA Energy bar and stem, a Ritchey Comp V2 seatpost, and a Selle San Marco Aspide saddle. With all name-brand components, the complete bike represents a significant value. And if you feel like its all-out race influence might be too much, just swap out the 23mm tires for some 25s—the Zero.9 then feels less raw and aggressive. But if you want a bike to toe the start line and be a contender at the finish—just add your pedals and bottle cages, and the Zero.9 is ready to go.-BRAD FORD





The moment is innocent. I start to cry. A few weeks earlier, I am fresh off a long weekend of late nights in South Beach Miami. Waiting in the office when I return is my test bike, the Scott Contessa Solace 35. I have not quite recovered from my getaway, and I'm in no mood to ride, but missing a deadline isn't an option, so I go. I want to cry.

I expect my ride to be shaky at best. At worst, I'll get dropped on the first climb out of town. But the Contessa 35 pulls through for me. Its shorter top tube and longer head tube put me in a comfortable, upright position. Instead of feeling cramped, like I often do on women's bikes, I am relaxed-and rightly so. The Solace is positioned to be the company's endurance road bike. "This is not a classics bike," Scott's bike

marketing manager, Zack Vestal, tells me. "The person buying it isn't racing on cobblestones."

That's not to say, however, that this bike isn't race-worthy. In fact, the Solace is designed to be as efficient at transferring power as it is at making long days in the saddle more enjoyable—a result of the frame's split construction. Scott optimizes what it calls the Comfort Zone—comprising the seatpost, top tube, and seatstays, along with the fork tips—by attaching the seatstays directly to the top tube. This creates a more compliant rear triangle and a seat tube with more aft flex. Engineers also eliminated the bridge between the seatstays, which minimizes

material but also puts the rear brake under the chainstay—an inconvenient but not impossible location. The Power Zone, which Vestal calls the spine of the bike, is made up of a tapered head tube, oversize down tube, massive bottom bracket, and asymmetrical chain- and seatstays—all designed to increase stiffness and maximize power. "That's what makes this a race bike," he says. Then he compares it with a performance SUV, "like a BMW M5."

I can attest to that comparison. On flat and rolling roads, the Solace was easy to get up to speed quickly. It was stiff and efficient and made climbing more enjoyable, especially out of the saddle. It let me descend faster than

COINCIDENCE?

Google the word "solace," and the first definition vou'll see is "comfort or consolation in a time of distress or sadness."



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ INTERNAL CABLE ROUTING

→ HMF (MID-GRADE) CARBONFIBER FRAME → REAR BRAKE

LOCATED UNDER THE CHAIN

STAY → SPLIT-FRAME DESIGN:
POWER ZONE AND COMFORT

ZONE → WOMEN-SPECIFIC

GEOMETRY → 18.9 LB (53CM)



I'm used to and didn't waver from my intended line. It gave me the confidence to get a little daring on nontraditional terrain. I rode it through a defunct golf course on overgrown singletrack, across broken wooden bridges, and up a tight switchback blanketed with leaves, and forgot I was on skinny tires.

But luxury comes with a price—and vice versa. My Solace 35 came with Shimano's

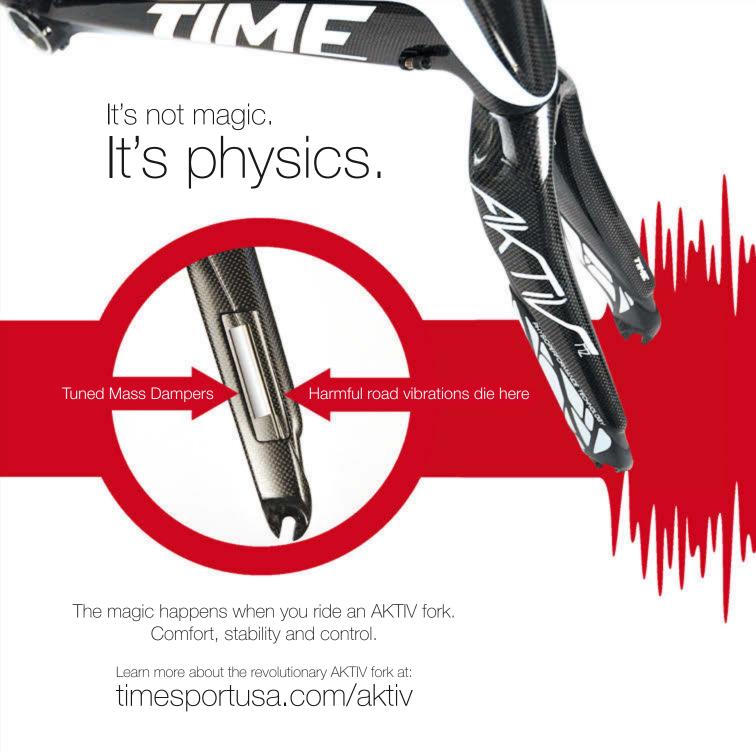
lower-tier Tiagra drivetrain and mostly Syncros components (Scott's house brand). Shifting wasn't as crisp as it is with higher-end parts, and I found the saddle to be a little unfriendly after only one ride—though saddles are an easy swap, and one of the most common with new bikes. This SUV is a little more "built Ford tough" than "the ultimate driving machine"—but for \$1,800, it's a steal.

More important, it's versatile. I didn't just test this bike on different terrain, or in different weather conditions, or on different routes. I rode it under different circumstances and through different emotions.

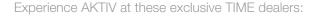
By the time we round the last bend on Schultz Bridge Road, it feels like someone is sitting on my chest. I'm sacrificing my breathing to hold back my tears. I have to ask Leah and Bill to go easy. "A good friend of mine passed away on Friday," I tell them. And with that, we are no longer three very different riders on three very different bikes. We are the same person, the one who has experienced self-doubt on a ride or cried alone or ridden through pain or shared a quiet moment with a brown horse.

"Suddenly this ride seems really important," Bill says as we start our final climb. He's right. For the rest of the time, no one says a word. The pressure in my chest subsides and I put everything I have left into the Solace. And it pulls through for me again, renewing my confidence all the way to the top and keeping me safe on the fast descent. And though we've all spread out a bit on this final stretch, I feel like we're riding side by side. Like we're all in this life together.—Jen sherry









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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ FULL-CARBON FRAME
AND FORK → SIZE-SPECIFIC
GEOMETRY CLAIMED TO
DELIVER SIMILAR
HANDLING, WHETHER
YOU'RE 5-FOOT-0 OR
6-FOOT-2 → CLEARANCE
FOR UP TO 40MM TIRES
→ CAN RACE 'CROSS IN A
PINCH → 18.2 LB (54CM)

JAMIS RENEGADE ELITE

READY, SET, GO (ANYWHERE)

PRICE \$4,199

here's a stream with a bridge of rocks across it—the type of rocks that kids (and some adults) toss to watch the splash. The rocks take the place of an old auto bridge that had been gradually knocked down by floods and slowly fell apart over time, until the township was forced to do something radical—remove it altogether, severing one half of the valley from the other and adding a four-mile detour to what was at one time a route we rode often.

The road remained on either side of the stream, a mostly rutted doubletrack that meandered up loose macadam that had seen better days. Only a handful of families still lived on it, in that splendid isolation you can get from a road no one wants to travel, and it had fallen into decay. As I tossed my bike on my shoulder to cross the creek then scramble up the other bank, I pictured the mental map of the area that I'm lucky enough to carry around, and made good my escape from that valley into the next.

I'd turned down this road because I was on a bike equipped for both dirt roads and pristine pavement—a "bike," in other words, not a "race bike" with limited use and comfort. And unless I am road racing, these are my druthers—to be riding on tires



at least 28mm wide, though I'm more likely to be rolling 32s or 35s. I prefer larger tires because they're more comfortable and durable, allowing me to spot a new turn and take it just to see where the road leads.

Jamis designed the Renegade for the rider with this mind-set. It sports generous clearance for tires up to 40mm wide. It's fun to ride—comfortable enough to take on an all-day outing, speedy enough for a fast hour's blaze. It's capable on sketchy roads, where it feels balanced and neutral thanks to relaxed frame

angles that are similar to some cyclocross bikes. Some of our testers even tossed a set of knobbies on the Renegade and took it for a spin at a local training race. While it wasn't as quick and light as a dedicated cyclocross bike, it could do double-duty in a pinch.

Jamis tuned the frame and fork to assist the voluminous tires in soaking up rough roads, while still providing feedback and connection to what's going on under the tires. It also designed the bike to efficiently respond to my input. It leapt when I altered

STEALTHY DETAIL

Don't like how fender/rack eyelets look? This bike has removable eyelets that screw into hidden mounts in the frame. course in a hurry, and when I pounded on the pedals, it got from point A to point B fast and with a minimum amount of fuss. Compared with other bikes of this type, or repurposed 'cross bikes, the Renegade embodies exceptional control paired with the extra compliance and comfort.

To make a bike that offers these qualities to all riders, Jamis gave each size of the Renegade unique head-tube angles, top-tube diameters, and chainstay lengths as well as a unique carbon layup in the fork and rear triangle. The

stration by Two Arms Inc.

I'D TURNED DOWN THIS ROAD BECAUSE I WAS ON A BIKE EQUIPPED FOR BOTH DIRT ROADS AND PRISTINE PAVEMENT—A "BIKE," IN OTHER WORDS, NOT A "RACE BIKE" WITH LIMITED USE AND COMFORT.

bike also has three different bottom-bracket drops and fork offsets. This level of customization is typically found only on bespoke or small-production-run frames, and what it means is that your experience on the Renegade is a nuanced and comfortable ride, whether you are petite or six-foot-plus.

Other thoughtful details: The fork legs jut out in front of the axle, and the dropouts are tucked behind the leading edge. This design holds the axle where it needs to be to provide the right amount of trail, and adds extra compliance to help handle rough roads. Trek and Cannondale incorporate this feature on their bad-road bikes, and it works just as well here.

In choosing parts for the Renegade Elite, Jamis went for pure economy and durability. Shifting is 11-speed Shimano RS685 mechanical mated to R785 hydraulic disc brakes. The Ultegra crank comes with 52/36 chainrings—a wide enough offering to serve low-end grunts up poor surfaces and high-end efforts to hang on to group rides—that can easily be swapped for larger or smaller options thanks to the crank's four-arm spider. The American Classic Argent tubeless wheels are shod in Clement USH 40mm clinchers. The rims are wide by road bike standards and add volume to the already-wide tires, a pairing that allows you to run slightly lower pressures for comfort and traction without the associated pitfalls of squirmy tires and pinch flats. A 15mm thru-axle holds the front wheel in place, and a traditional quick release secures the rear. I'm being picky here, but I'd rather see thru-axles on both ends because I think they work better with disc brakes.

At the end of my time on the Renegade, I mused on how well the bike had served me on smooth roads and battered ones, down alleys and rail beds, for adventuring and errand running, and even for a little cyclocross. In other words, I thought, it was just what I want out of a "bike."—MIKE YOZELL





GRAVEL BIKES

The term "gravel bike" is silly. There, I said it. I prefer "adventure bike" (which is what Jamis calls the Renegade) or any other sobriquet that isn't so one-dimensional. By definition, this type of bike should be able to handle almost anything you can toss at it-gravel roads, sure, but also a bit of 'cross racing and fast group rides. These bikes have a demeanor that tends toward neutral in comfort and handling, allowing you to ride without having to manhandle your bike or keep all your attention on what it's doing-yet they also are nimble and quick to accelerate. Adventure bikes typically have clearance for at least 32mm tires with room for fenders and the ability to add a rack. Given that statistically fewer riders "race" rather than "ride," I think more people would be happier on a bike of this type than on road-race-oriented options.-M.Y.



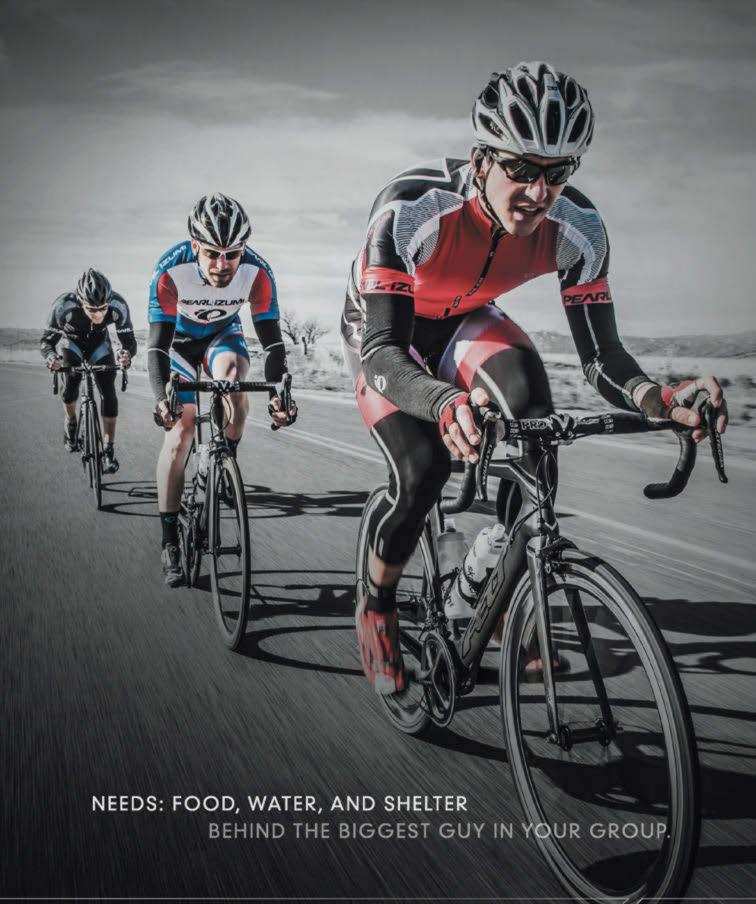
whether we're on a gravel, plush, adventure, classics, or (perhaps my least-favorite moniker) an endurance bike.

Whatever the name, the bikes marketed under these categories generally aim to put the rider in a more upright position than on a race bike, and to better isolate him or her from unpleasant road vibrations and forces. Overall, our test crew has applauded the development and growing acceptance of this style of bike. But we've also worried that the prevailing designs have begun to emphasize comfort to such an extent that some end up feeling slow and sedate. The aptly named Defy bucks this trend—and sets the standard for the balance of thrill and comfort that this type of bike can achieve.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- → STELLAR 105 11-SPEED DRIVETRAIN
- → SMOOTHER AND FASTER THAN THE

POWERFUL DISC BRAKES → FRAME CLEARANCE FOR 28MM TIRES → 19.8 LB (L)



RIDE 365

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I vividly remember when I first rode a Defy. It was on back roads in Pennsylvania, while testing bikes for BICYCLING's 2009 Editors' Choice awards. We had just powered through some punchy rollers, then took a hard left down a dirt road. I still recall looking down at the blurred, gray gravel passing beneath me and feeling awe at how fast I was going, how in control I felt, and how much the bike smoothed the road. That experience marked a turning point for me: I no longer preferred race bikes as my primary ride.

As astonishing as that Defy was, the 2015 redesign manages to go further. According to Giant, the engineers there started with a clean slate but retained the same goals as with the original Defy: light, stiff, and smooth.

New tube shapes and revised carbon layups boosted pedaling stiffness and ride compliance at the same time. The seatpost is a noticeable change from the previous teardrop aero shape, and results in better fore/aft flex. Ultrathin seatstays-the thinnest Giant says it could make while still keeping them hollow-also help soften blows and keep vibration at bay.

Also new: The line is based on two frames instead of three. The Advanced and Advanced Pro share the same frame, which weighs 1,052 grams. The Advanced Pro has slightly better components and Giant's Overdrive 2 carbon tapered fork (1½-inch lower bearing with a larger, 11/4-inch upper bearing). The fork on the Advanced has an aluminum steerer with a traditional taper BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

The carbon frame on the \$4.900 Defv Advanced Pro O is the same as that used for the \$1,750 Defy Advanced 3 and the 2 model tested here.

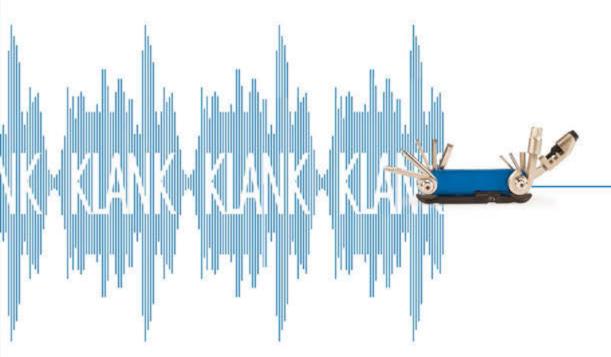
from 1½-inch to 1½-inch. The flagship Defy Advanced SL frame weighs just 920 grams and has an integrated seatpost.

Our Defy Advanced 2 has a great mix of parts. This was my first longterm test of Shimano's revamped 105 group, and the technology and function that's trickled down from higher-end groups is impressive. Shifts are precise and buttery-smooth. The TRP Spyre mechanical disc brakes provided quiet, predictable braking power that blows away any rim-style brake. Compressionless cable housing makes the lever feel firm, not squishy, when it's pulled.

The improvements are more than just marketing ploys—there is a palpable difference in the overall ride, although the previous version was so good that this can't be called a quantum leap forward. Instead, everything I loved about the Defy is a little bit better. The bottom bracket and head-tube area feel rock solid when you sprint or climb out of the saddle. The bike corners sharper and more predictably. Overall, the Defy rides smoother and more refined. And it seems to weigh a good pound or two less than the scale says.

One gripe: The rear brake cable rattles inside the frame. This slight annoyance seems like a bigger deal than it is because the whole bike works so well otherwise. A mechanic could fix the rattle, but this is the kind of detail that should be addressed at the factory.

Like The Godfather Part II, this sequel is better than the original, acclaimed version. The Defy, and some others in its class, have become so good at everything that labeling them endurance bikes or anything else similarly limiting would be selling them short. Sure, the Defy works great on long rides, but it works equally well for short, intense fistfights, too. The Defy is what I would simply call the modern road bikenothing more, nothing less .- RON KOCH



QUIETLY KEEPING BIKES ON THE ROAD. ONE TOOL AT A TIME.







he Eddy Merckx Mourenx69 commemorates a legendary stage win by the Cannibal at the 1969 Tour de Francehis first appearance in the race he'd win five times. By Stage 17, Merckx already had a lead of more than eight minutes. The conventional wisdom was that all he needed to do was ride safe and stick near his closest rivals to make sure none of them regained significant time. But on this mountainous stage, Merckx made an audacious attack, going away on a 140km solo break through the Pyrenees—adding another eight minutes to his lead and ensuring such dominance that by the end of the Tour, he'd own the leader's jersey, the sprinter's jersey, and the king of the mountains jersey.

Not surprisingly, the new Mourenx69 is built for long days in the saddle. I thought of that legendary stage on one particularly hard ride of my own. I had been pedaling alone for a few hours, when I deviated from my route, making my ride much longer than planned. But the Mourenx69 seemed to be smoothing out the road, so I just kept rolling,

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

COMFORTABLE, STABLE, AND PREDICTABILE RIDE → ALL-AROUND WORKHORSE THAT DOES NOT NEED TO BE BABIED OVER TOUGH TERRAIN → READY FOR A 140KM SOLO BREAK OVER HIGH MOUNTAIN PASSES → 16.9 LB (54CM)

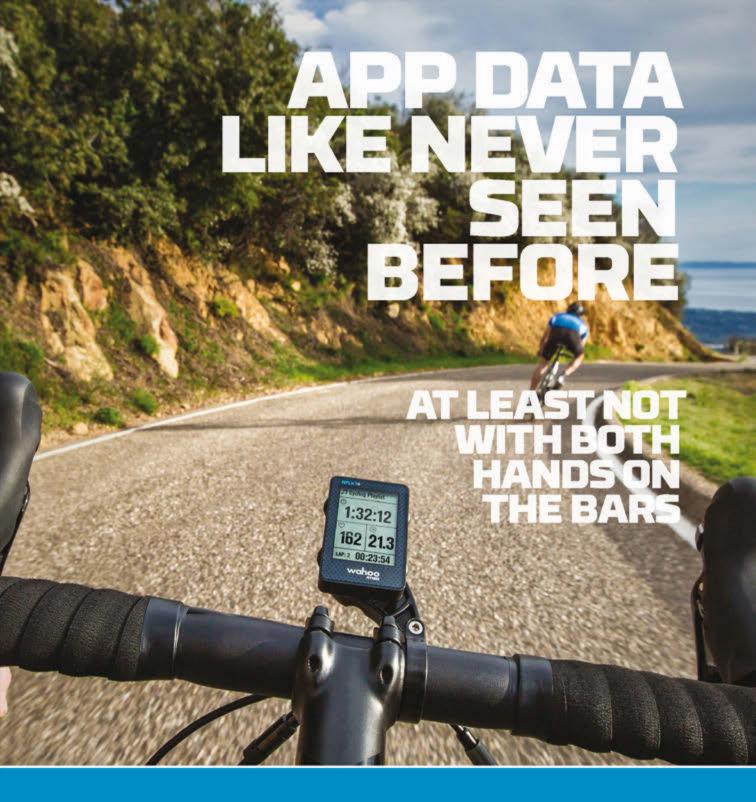
guided by a vague idea of which direction would take me home. Then the first twinges of cramping started. Then I hit some rollers. Then I hit two climbs. They were short and not particularly steep, but at this point they were enough to make me curse.

But the Mourenx69 got me through. The bike provided stability, comfort, and a balanced ride that was forgiving when I started to fade. I could lean with the bike on descents and not wonder what was going to happen. I could climb without worrying that the bike would waver on the steeps. When I reached down to grab a bottle or sat up to stretch with hands off the bar, the bike didn't ask me to perform a balancing act. A workhorse that demanded little from me besides the bare minimumcontinuing to turn the pedals-the Mourenx69 not only made the ride possible, but also enjoyable.

The bike's design incorporates asymmetrically shaped chainstays and slightly elongated seatstays, which help to damp road noise. This design also provides just a little bit of additional stiffness, but only where it's needed most. The elegant and slightly curved fork further lengthens the wheelbase and provides additional compliance. The result is a smooth ride that has a nice balance of efficiency and stability, with predictable tracking.

The Mourenx69 comes with a deepdrop Deda bar and reliable Shimano Ultegra 11-speed compact mechanical group. Put together, this is a bike that makes the most of your hard work on those days that feel like your own Grand Tour stage.-GREG KAPLAN

J/K There's a famous and potentially blasphemous joke with the punchline. "God wishes he were Eddy Merckx." Google it.





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he Domane Disc 6.9 has its quirks. But I also think it may be the smartest, friendliest bike I've ridden.

I'll start with the quirks—namely, the signature IsoSpeed decoupler pivot, which allows the seatmast to flex farther and more easily than if it were rigidly attached to the top tube. Other reviewers, and my BICYCLING colleagues, seem to agree that IsoSpeed has amazing bump-swallowing capabilities. For the most part, I find the Domane more compliant and smoother-riding than most road bikes. In the saddle, I notice striking overtones of stillness and efficiency—with two asterisks.

The first is that the IsoSpeed cushions only my butt. The ride feels a bit disjointed because the front of the bike diffuses impacts less than the rear does.

FENDERS Are Cool

This was the

first modern bike
I knew of that
had legitimate
pro racing
lineage as
well as fender
mounts. When
we got our first
snow in
Colorado, I
unabashedly
installed fenders.

The Domane's front end still feels more compliant than most (and the squishy-but-not-bulky Bontrager IsoZone foam padding under the Bontrager bar tape helps), but it's not as forgiving as the rear end.

Asterisk two: IsoSpeed does its thing only when I am seated. When I am out of the saddle, the front and rear smooth the road in a more synchronized way. That is good, but the bike feels noticeably different from when I am sitting. This is generally true to various degrees on almost all bikes, but the change is more pronounced here.

Still, the IsoSpeed works. And it is

part of the reason the Domane became a favorite bike to take on longer rides and rougher roads: because it is so damn smooth and—though I usually dislike the word—comfortable.

Now to the other characteristics that make the Domane a high-performance, yet practical and easy-to-ride bike.

I'm used to \$8,000 road bikes being efficient and blindingly quick. And the Domane Disc 6.9 does feel even stiffer to me than Trek's Madone 7 race series—it should feel quick on the climbs. But the handlebar seems heavy, and I'd estimate that the discs add a weight penalty of at least half



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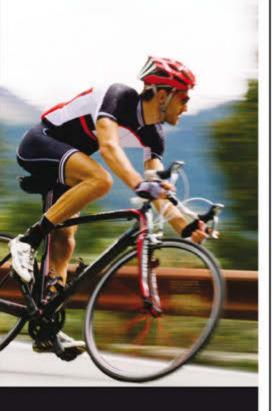






REACH YOUR LIMIT THEN KEEP GOING

WE HAVE THE HIGH-QUALITY, CUSTOMIZED HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT YOU NEED TO FUEL EVERY RIDE







WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ REFINED, HIGH-PERFORMANCE BIKE THAT IS SMOOTH AND VERSATILE → THRU-AXLES FRONT AND REAR THAT ARE CONVERTIBLE TO TRADITIONAL GR, WITH SOME SACRIFICE OF STIFFNESS → THE BEST-SHIFTING (SHIMANO DI2) AND BRAKING (SHIMANO R785 HYDRAULIC DISCS) ON THE ROAD MARKET → 16.7 LB (54CM)

a pound. I never felt slow climbing on the Domane Disc, but I never felt fast either. The bike does have low enough gearing that spinning up hills doesn't require God's own quads, and it's coupled with the best shifting in the road market, Shimano Di2.

And going down, oh my. Here's an anecdote that summarizes my experience: Coming off a high mountain pass in Colorado, I saw that I was closing in on a slower-moving car in my lane, and sat up to have a drink. I casually glanced at my bike computer and noticed that I was moving at nearly 60 mph—with just one hand on the bar, the bike still brilliantly composed.

Feedback and accuracy are also exceptional in fast corners. Coupled with Shimano's tremendous R785 hydraulic disc brakes, the Domane is my number one with a bullet for any road descent. The IsoSpeed could play a role here as well, theoretically keeping the bike more connected to the road.

The Domane Disc is one of the first road

bikes available with thru-axles front and rear. These improve steering precision because they stiffen the frame/wheel interface, says Michael Mayer, Trek's road brand manager, and they also ensure that the wheel is properly aligned in the dropout, reducing the chance of disc-rotor rub.

And if you're a fan of big tires, the Domane's 25mm Bontrager R3 Hard-Case Lites will make you smile, as will the clearance for tires that are much wider. The bike easily accommodated the 29s I later installed, and I think I could have gone up to 32mm. The wheels are also tubeless-ready.

The Domane has the best brakes, the best shifting, stability at speed, precise handling, a smooth ride, the ability to take wide tires, tubeless-compatible wheels, thru-axles, fender mounts, mortal-friendly gearing, low weight, and a lifetime frame warranty. This bike offers so much that despite its quirks, I can't deny it: The Domane Disc is one of the best road bikes available.—MATT PHILLIPS

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→ POWERTAP, JOULE GPS HEAD UNIT, HEART-RATE STRAP INCLUDED → MADE FOR LONG RIDES LIKE METRIC CENTURIES AND 100-MILERS → PAINT COLORS SELECTED BY A PANEL OF FEMALE RIDERS → ONE SWEET DESCENDER → 16.4 LB (52CM)

and the answer is yes, it comes with the bike.

Raleigh is the first bike maker to offer a model with a PowerTap power meter, an interesting choice for this women's bike. The Capri is an endurance machine suited for all-day rides—not a whip built for wattage-obsessed racers who routinely toe the line at four-corner crits. Last year's top-of-the-line carbon Capri came with Ultegra Di2 electronic





HIS AND HERS

Guys, wish your road bike came with a power meter? Check out the Capri's brother, the Revenio Carbon 4 PowerTap for \$4,500, which includes Shimano Ultegra Di2 shifting.

shifting—which I love to have on long rides, given how much you shift over the miles—but this year Raleigh replaced the Di2 with a mechanical Ultegra 11-speed drivetrain and the PowerTap package. This is kind of cool, but I wondered whether many endurance riders want to watch their watts? I called Raleigh's

marketing manager Brian Fornes to get his take.

"We were eyeing up the trends," he explained. "Fondos are growing in popularity. Obviously there's the Strava phenomenon. There are riders who aren't racers, but they still want to know their numbers and improve and go fast. Lots of these riders are buying aftermarket

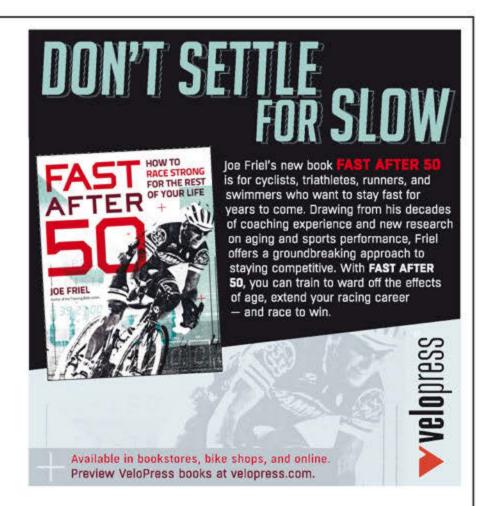
power meters and GPS units. We figured we would just integrate it all into a model."

I'll admit I enjoyed hopping on the Capri and having all my metrics pop up on my bike computer. Choosing and installing a power meter can seem complicated, and the convenience of this system certainly makes the device more accessible to the nonracers that Raleigh is targeting. But the power meter is just one component—albeit an interesting and unusual one—that makes the Capri appealing.

Raleigh tweaked its women's endurance geometry last year, giving the Capri a taller head tube and slacker seat angle to shift the rider's center of gravity back and take some weight off the bar for a comfortable long-haul ride. Fornes claims the position mitigates wrist, neck, and back aches that can arise while riding many miles in a low, aggressive position. I'm not particularly prone to these problems, but I appreciated the comfort the tweaks provided. The carbon frame and fork, upgraded this year, took the edge off bumps and chatter, but allowed enough feedback that the bike had a pleasant, lively road feel. I was also thankful for the Prologo Nago EVO DEA Ti-Rox women's saddle, which never irritated me, even after 50 to 60 miles on rough country roads.

At 16.4 pounds, the Capri did not feel particularly light compared with similarly priced endurance offerings. But it climbed acceptably and really lit up on fast straightaways and swooping descents. In those situations, the bike held its line and wasn't thrown off by minute stutters or movements from my body. The stiff frame still responded well to my input, and didn't exhibit any twitchiness or nervous tics. That made the Capri a joy to let fly on long, lazy downhills. And the stock, 25mm Kenda Kountach tires hugged the tarmac securely, even when I rode during a surprise snow squall that glazed the ground. The Weinmann Momentum SL alloy wheels felt stiff and maintained momentum well, though as with many bikes in this price range, upgrading to lighter wheels would elevate the Capri from a good bike to a great one.

As is, the Capri Carbon 3 PowerTap is a solid fit for the woman who not only loves to ride long today, but also wants a user-friendly way to start training with power—which will help her go even longer and faster tomorrow.—SELENE YEAGER







make a leap of faith—to believe that their wind-cheating benefits will make you faster, despite the fact that those benefits are hard to feel. Even riders who obsess over their power output have to diligently review the data to quantify the difference. Additionally, aerodynamic frames often weigh more, flex more, feel rougher, handle more vaguely, and are less predictable in crosswinds than standard road bikes. That's a lot of compromise for gains that are hard to detect. Cervélo attempted to achieve a better balance with the new \$5.

Since the S5 was launched at the 2012 Tour de France, it has remained one of the most aerodynamic bikes in its category, which made Cervélo's job a little easier. To improve, the S5 didn't need to become more slippery, but the company could work on making it a stiffer, sharper-handling bike. Cervélo can claim success in these regards: The

ENERGY SAVER

Cervélo says that maintaining 40 kph on the S5 requires 11.3 fewer watts than on the semiaero Cervélo R5, and 20.3 fewer watts than on a non-

aero road bike.

2015 S5 frame is 35 percent torsionally stiffer, with 17 percent more lateral fork stiffness. These improvements, says Cervélo, were done without adding weight or affecting aerodynamics.

Save for a slightly shorter stack, the bike's geometry stayed the same—but the new S5 feels totally different on the road. Compared with its predecessor, which I've ridden extensively, it feels like a quicker-handling and more accurate bike. I'd have no qualms about racing this in a crit or diving into a technical descent at full speed. I thought the old S5 handled well enough, but I was always aware that I was on an aero bike when carving challenging descents. No

such reservations on the new S5.

Cervélo also claims the bottom-bracket area is 6 percent stiffer than the previous version. I didn't sense the change, but I did note that before testing the new S5, I was riding a 2015 Specialized S-Works Tarmac—and the S5 didn't feel like a step backward in stiffness. Given the extra rigidity, I was surprised that the S5 is also reasonably compliant. On one section of rough pavement that I cross with almost all my test bikes, the S5 was actually one of the more forgiving frames I've ridden.

The updates aren't relegated to performance only. Other smaller changes make the new S5 more user-friendly:



- PRESTIGE DEALERS

 A Bicycle Odyssey- Sausalito, CA

 Napa River Velo- Napa, CA Estelle Bicycles- Denver, CO Define Bike and Body- Denver, CO Full Cycle Bikes- Boulder, CO Play Tri- Dallas, TX Trails End Cycling- Purceville, VA
- MONUMENT DEALERS

 Tucson Endurance Center-Tucson, AZ

 Kings Bicycle Store- Seal Beach, CA

 OC Bicycle Repair- Lake Forest, CA

 Carbon Connection Cyclery- Carlsbad, CA

 Pegasus Bicycle Works- Danville, CA

 Spoke Bicycles- Williamstown, MA

 Cyclecraft- Parsippany, NJ

 Velo Science Bike Works- New Albany, OH

 Greenville Custom Bicycle- Greenville, SC

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 Millcreek Bicycles- Salt Lake City, UT
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 Huckleberry Bicycles- San Francisco, CA
 Block Bikes- Lancaster, CA
 Coates Cyclery- Ponoma, CA
 The Bike Express- Danbury, CT
 Moontime Cyclery- Edwards, CO
 The Bike Rack- Washington DC
 Bicycle Snort Inc., Varn Beach, El

- Bicycle Sport Inc- Vero Beach, FL The Bike Bistro- Fort Myers, FL St Petes Bike and Fitness- St. Petersburg, FL
- Sun Cycling- Miami, FL Roscoe Village Bikes, Chicago, IL Sammy's Bikes- St. Charles, IL BG Bicycles- Houma, LA
- Parvilla Cycles- Edgewater, MD Service Course Cycle Studio- Baltimore, MD
- Cycle Lodge- Pembroke, MA Grace Bicycles- Holliston, MA Woodys Cyclery- Middleton, MA Fitwerx- Peabody, MA

Chelsea Bicycles- NY, NY Chelsea Bicycles- NY, NY
Endurance Werx- NY, NY
Victory Cycle Works- Burnt Hills, NY
Endless Trail Bikework-Dobbs Ferry, NY
Chain Ring Rhythm- East Aurora, NY
CH Cycles- NY, NY
Fitwerx NJ- Ridgefield Park, NJ
Veloce Bicycles- Portland, OR
Era Pro- Lancaster, PA
Brumble Bikes- Westerly, RI
Bicycle Speed Shop- Houston, TX
Gran Fondo Cycles- Nashville, TN
Fitwerx- Waitsfield, VT

CANADIAN MERCKX DEALERS

Different Bikes - West Vancouver, BC
Caté Roubaix Bicycle Studio - Cochrane, Alberta
Pedalhead Road Works, Edmonton Alberta
Woodcock Cycle - Winnipeg, Manitoba
Spin Kicks - Vaughan, Ontario
Flying Monkey Bike Shop - Campbellville, Ontario
The Cyclery - Ottawa, Ontario
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HANDLING FROM PREVIOUS VERSION → NEW HANDLEBAR AND WHEELS OFFER ADDITIONAL,

CLAIMED AERO GAIN → FRAMESET \$4,500; COMPLETE BIKE \$5,500 AND UP → 15.6 LB (54CM)



The cable routing is set up for mechanical and electronic drivetrains and hydraulic brakes. The frame and fork got extra clearance and can now fit a 25mm-wide tire.

The S5 does still makes some trade-offs. At 1,060 grams, the S5 frame is one of the lightest aero road bikes, but is half a pound heavier than many top race bikes (Cervélo's R5 frame weighs a claimed 808 grams). It also gets pushed around in the wind more than lower-profile bikes and is noticeably loud: Road noise, pebble strikes, and shifting all seem to be amplified by the frame, and the wheels are quite loud as well. The ride is a bit numb, lacking the sweet, lively, and connected feel that my favorite race bikes have.

With the S5, Cervélo has narrowed the gap between aero bikes and traditional race models, but it hasn't eliminated the difference. Still, that doesn't detract from what the company has accomplished here: It made one of the fastest—if not the fastest—aero road bikes stiffer, better handling, and more rewarding to ride. While traditional road bikes might be lighter and livelier, the S5 is almost certainly faster. And if that's your priority, the S5 offers a rare blend of wind-beating speed with fewer compromises.—MATT PHILLIPS







THIS IS YOUR LIFE. BE A HERO.













started with a text from a colleague and ended with a relationship-straining, 15-mile time trial on the Full Tilt Boogie. The photo my coworker sent showed a near-perfect slice (five layers of icing!) that she had ordered as a reward for a tiring ride. Envious, I headed out the following day in search of my own slab. My route would take me 35 miles north on rural roads and rail trails to the Bowmanstown Diner, known for its homemade desserts. Before leaving, I promised my girlfriend I'd be home in time to watch the kids.

I was confident in this 'cross bike's ability to help me fulfill my promise. I had ridden it in driving rain and blinding snow and ripped it around muddy racecourses. The aggressive angles and carbon frame make it fast and responsive. The front end is especially stout: Fork legs as thick as flagpoles are joined

× Mudder Lover

During one 'cross race my FTB collected what felt like 30 pounds of mud and ice, but the frame's tire clearance allowed the wheels to keep spinning.

by an unyielding thru-axle. The seat angle pushed my weight forward, making it easy to dig the front wheel into corners or correct poor line choices.

Seatstays attach relatively low on the seat tube, which limits unwanted wiggling and prevents some jolts from reaching the saddle. This allowed me to stay seated and pedal harder over rough terrain. With the SRAM Force hydraulic disc brakes, I could scrub speed quickly without skidding. During one race on a gooey course, I passed several fitter riders because I could corner harder.

This is a race bike, but the civil ride and generous tire clearance (up to 40mm) make it suitable for gravel lanes and bad roads, too. Van Dessel owner

Edwin Bull says he rides singletrack on his FTB. "You can take it anywhere."

MIRRORED DECALS → RAZOR-SHARP HANDLING → 16.7 LB (54CM)

I thought the same as I flew homeward over gravel trail, cracked bike path, and rolling backroads, buzzing from sugar. Midway back, I flatted and discovered my CO2 cartridge was spent. By the time I could borrow a pump, I was way behind schedule and 15 miles from home. Regretting my decision to ride so far, I shifted down and told myself the searing pain in my thighs was fair penance. The FTB propelled me forward—I covered those 15 mixedterrain miles in less than 50 minutes. Chest heaving, eyes watering, I walked through my back door just in time. Fulltilt boogie, indeed.—Louis mazzante





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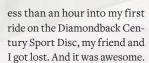
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As kids, we all had just one bike, and we rode it on pavement, dirt, gravel, and lawns. We never thought, Should I be riding here? We just rode there. But sometime around Lance Armstrong's third Tour de France victory, road cycling started to shift. To me, the experience—and the bike industry's priorities-ended up feeling unbalanced: too much performance, not enough adventure. These days, a gradual realignment is re-establishing the boundaries of road cycling in a way that reminds me of my 12-year-old self, riding my Ross BMX well past the limits of what it was designed to do.

Which brings me back to the Century Sport Disc. With its sturdy aluminum frame, compact drivetrain, and disc brakes, it's equipped to handle just about anything you throw at it. That day, we decided to see if a new footbridge connecting two walking paths had been completed. We were in luck. After duck walking over the metal span, we planted our bikes on the other side, feeling like explorers in a new land.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ BUTTED ALUMINUM FRAME WITH CARBON FORK → SHIMANO 105, ULTEGRA, AND DISC BRAKES FOR LESS
THAN \$2,000 → GEOMETRY EMBODIES BOTH ENDURANCE AND RACE CHARACTERISTICS → 20.1 LB (56CM)

The path quickly devolved to a singletrack with roots, puddles, and even a small stream crossing. The bike let me traverse it all. Mud soon caked the 25mm Michelin tires, but thanks to the TRP HY/RD cable-actuated hydraulic disc brakes (an upgrade over most discequipped bikes at this price) and generous frame clearance, braking wasn't affected.

After riding through a field, over some asphalt, and along a power-line cut, we found ourselves sandwiched between two housing developments, with only one option: a stranger's lawn. Luckily, after a short walk (and no aggressive dogs), we were riding home again, smiles plastered on our faces.

Of course, the bike was designed for the road, which is where it spent most of

its time on subsequent rides. The frame combines the longer head tube of an endurance bike with the wheelbase and angles of a racing frameset. It is responsive in corners and out of the saddle, but remains forgiving while you're sitting in it. "Stability" and "predictability" are often euphemisms for being plodding, but here, they're fitting compliments. This bike rides just the way you want it to, and at \$1,700, it's a bargain.

That said, the Century Sport Disc's potential for adventure is what really hooked me—deep down in a place I thought I had forgotten. This bike made me feel like a kid again. And because of that, I'd pick it over some of the more expensive options in my garage when I'm feeling like getting the right kind of lost.—WHIT YOST

NOSTALGIA

Another reason this bike might take you back? Diamondback was one of the leading makers of BMX bikes in the '80s.





ith its wavy fork, slightly curved top tube, and bold, contrasting paint, the Lapierre Pulsium

Ultimate is striking at first glance and first ride. Pro riders on Team FDJ.fr raced the Pulsium in the 2014 edition of Paris-Roubaix, and the bike's Classics heritage means that the Pulsium is as happy to vie for position in a pack as it is to see you through rough roads and long days in the saddle.

The most notable feature of the Pulsium is the Shock Absorption Technology (SAT), a vibration-reducing elastomer that's built into the top tube (where it meets the seat tube). SAT is apparently so effective, in fact, that during my first outing, I stopped several times to see if my tire pressure was lower than usual. The more time I spent on the bike, the more I became accustomed to this level of isolation from the road, and I realized the Pulsium was smoothing out rough surfaces without completely deadening the ride. I was most thankful for the comfort on urban rides through

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

LAPIERRE SHOCK ABSORPTION TECHNOLOGY (SAT) SMOOTHS THE RIDE WITHOUT OVERLY DAMPING ROAD FEEL → UNCONVENTIONAL FORK-BLADE SHAPE ADDS COMPLIANCE → ENDURANCE GEOMETRY PROVIDES A SLIGHTLY UPRIGHT, COMFORTABLE POSITION → RIDDEN IN THE COBBLED SPRING CLASSICS → PLENTY OF FRAME CLEARANCE FOR WIDER TIRES → 16.3 LB (54CM)

the well-worn streets of Philadelphia, where the bike soaked up much of the jarring chatter while still feeling lively and responsive.

When taken onto country roads, dirt, and gravel, however, the Pulsium showed its racing DNA. It responded with no hesitation to my commands, darting quickly around potholes and depressions. It climbed hills with resolve, efficiently channeling my power. When the road tilted downward, the Pulsium handled predictably and revealed a patient, assured personality. In tight corners, the front of the bike responded with race quickness while the back lent stability. This combined for a relaxed feeling that eased my mind in fast turns,

even on loose-gravel descents. And I never forgot I was on an endurance bike—the Pulsium put me in a more upright position than a purebred race model, helping to ward off fatigue when I spent hours in the saddle.

The Pulsium Ultimate comes with Shimano Ultegra wheels and brake calipers, which are complemented with a Dura-Ace Di2 drivetrain. For the budget-conscious, several other models are available, down to the Pulsium 300 with a 105 configuration for \$2,700. Whichever version you get, the Lapierre Pulsium delivers racing speed with the comfort and handling of an all-day ride. And it's certain to turn a few heads, too.-GREG KAPLAN

GO WIDER

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eople who spend three months riding in Chamonix, France, don't often leave with many regrets, but I have one now. I had spent the summer on a hardtail 29er. Don't get me wrong, my experience riding in the Alps—and the beauty I saw on my bike—was unforgettable. I also derived plenty of pleasure from occasionally pulling that hardtail right up behind guys on six-inch-travel bikes at the bike park and seeing the looks of surprise on their faces. But I can't deny that those steep, rugged, and technical trails would've been a lot more fun on a long-travel trail bike.

When I began testing the Juliana Roubion this past winter on the rocky, technical singletrack of eastern Pennsylvania, that tinge of regret was only heightened. After my second ride, I posted a photo of the bike on Facebook, with this wistful caption: "I wish I'd had this bike with me in the Alps."

The next morning, I woke up to this string of comments:

OLIVER: You'll just have to hold onto it, and bring it back next summer so I can show you some more trails.

TOM: Or you can mail it over in the meantime.;)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ 27.5-INCH WHEELS → 150MM (6 INCHES) OF TRAVEL → SRAM 1X11 SHIFTER AND 10-42 CASSETTE,
RACEFACE 32T FRONT CHAINRING → IDENTICAL FRAME TO SANTA CRUZ BRONSON → 27.1 LB (S)

OLI: It's a girl's bike, Tom! I'd make a joke about you riding like a girl, but this bike would actually fit you well.

TOM: Laugh all you want. I can ride a girl's bike like a man!

After having some lulz at Tom's expense—he said we could—I reassured him that he didn't have a proclivity toward women's-specific bikes. And I told Oli that he had a good eye. Juliana is the women's brand of Santa Cruz, and the Roubion shares an identical frame with the Santa Cruz Bronson. In fact, almost everything on my size-small Roubion—including geometry, carbon layup, and parts—is the same as that on a size small Carbon CC (Santa Cruz's top-of-the-line composite) Bronson with an Xo1 kit. The only differences on the Roubion are the house-branded carbon handlebar and women's saddle, and the matte evergreen paint job. It'd seem that, according to Juliana, "riding like a man" and "riding like a girl" are not so different after all.

Brand manager Katie Zaffke says, "The only real difference we see between men and women as it relates to bike fit is scale. Women tend to be smaller than men on average, so we recommend riders select a bike size based on reach. Regardless of gender, we believe in delivering the best trailriding experience possible, by trusting in proven geometries and engineering. As such, we don't alter the geometry." This party line stands out during a time when most major brands are telling the story of bikes that are designed especially for women, with differentiated fit and features. And because of that, it may alienate some buyers.





BLAZING TRAIL

The brand is named for Olympian and Mountain Bike **World Champion** Juli Furtado, who worked with Santa Cruz to make the first women's specific mountain bike in 1999: the Juliana.

But after riding the Roubion, I find it hard to argue with the company's approach. With its 150mm (six inches) of travel, slack angles, and burly tubes, this bike was built to go downhill fast, and it encouraged me to seek out tougher lines than usual, even in wet and slippery conditions. The Roubion put me in a wide stance, lending a reassuring sense of stability as it plowed faithfully where it was pointed, down steep, rocky, and loose descents. Nailing tight switchbacks and quick, sharp turns at speed were no problem either on the 27.5-inch wheels. The 17.3-inch chainstays are about average in length, and helped balance maneuverability and stability. The RockShox Reverb Stealth 100mm dropper post (120mm on sizes medium and large) enabled me to keep my weight well over the back where it needed to be. Everything felt like hero dirt.

For a bike built for high-speed enduro racing and all-mountain riding, the Roubion was surprisingly adept at climbing and maneuvering through slower, technical terrain. Santa Cruz's patented, multipivot VPP suspension system gave the bike a solid and efficient pedaling platform. On climbs, I could leave the Fox Float CTD Kashima shock in its middle setting, never feeling the need to fully lock it out. The controlled suspension and stiff frame tubes allowed the Roubion to transfer my power effectively as I chugged up steep, gravel access roads and winding, singletrack ascents. The weight helped, too: At just 27 pounds for the size small, the



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Roubion allowed me to keep up with friends on lighter cross-country bikes. Riders who want to lighten their bike further can opt for the Enve carbon wheels—though the \$2,000 upgrade saves only 154 grams.

On flatter terrain, the Roubion marched steadily through East Coast rock gardens

and responded sensitively when I shifted my body or picked up the front end to pop it over obstacles. Being able to run lower tire pressure on the tubeless WTB STi23 wheels helped to give the bike additional traction and took the edge off of craggy rocks. The 13.6-inch-high bottom bracket provided plenty of clearance

for obstacles, but it also took a couple of rides to get used to when I was getting on and off the saddle. But I learned to adjust so that I no longer had to search for the ground with my toes before or after clipping out.

The trade-off for all this efficiency, however, is a lack of some of the plushness I've come to expect from long-travel trail bikes. The Roubion soaks up the impact of hitting bigger obstacles at speed, and it swallows drops; it just does so more like a tank than a luxury SUV.

You could say that Juliana made few if any concessions to women in building the Roubion. But neither did it concede any performance for price and market gain—and I loved riding the end result. It's a class-leading option for women who don't want or need women's geometry, but still want to ride a bike—and a brand—that they identify with. And as Tom and Oli illuminated in their Facebook bro-down, the Roubion makes us think twice about what makes a "men's bike" and a "girl's bike." And I like where that could go: Maybe someday, to more of us, the phrases "ride like a man" and "ride like a girl" won't mean very much at all.—GLORIA LIU





OBSESSION FOR VICTORY

















































t first glance, the new Transition Smuggler is more of a Puzzler. The 29er wheels and the relatively spartan 115mm of rear travel paint it as an XC-minded machine. But the look and ride suggest a more playful personality.

The bike is like a mashup: two disparate songs combined to make a third. Sometimes it works (Girl Talk's "Oh No"), and sometimes not ("Smells Like Bootylicious"—Nirvana and Destiny's Child). Here, Transition has created something unique that works beautifully, despite its contradictions.

The Smuggler uses the Giddy Up suspension linkage, a variation on the Horst Link design. Where most bike companies have steadily increased rear-wheel travel, Transition went the other way. But the Smuggler is no race bike. "We are known for having superfun bikes, and this is at the top of the list," says marketing project manager Lars Sternberg. So the geometry looks more like what you find on an enduro model: a 67.5-degree head angle, low

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ TRANSITION'S FIRST TRUE LINKAGE-SUSPENSION DESIGN → 130MM ROCKSHOX PIKE FORK, MONARCH RT3 SHOCK WITH DEBONAIR UPGRADE → SMUGGLER 2 OPTION WITHOUT DROPPER POST FOR \$3,299 → 29.1 LB (M)

bottom bracket, tight chainstays, and a relatively long front end.

The bike's steep seat tube helps riders keep the front wheel on the ground when climbing, but I still needed to slide forward on the saddle, especially on technical ascents and switchbacks. The bike is a capable climber, however, with solid rear-wheel traction.

That said, the Smuggler clearly excels going downhill. It transformed, playfully goading me to hit wall rides or try to double small gap jumps. For rock gardens, I unweighted slightly and floated through the chop. Then I pushed it hard into turns, letting the front wheel float while the back end of the bike compressed into a carve.

Transition tunes the suspension so that it doesn't fight against pedaling

so much, and made 33 percent the sweet spot for sag. That's more than on some shorter-travel bikes, and it helps the rear wheel stay in contact with the trail as the suspension floats in the middle of the stroke, easily reacting to small bumps.

Sitting back on the bike, especially when aided by the dropper post, I forgot that I was on a short-travel 29er—enough to bottom out a couple of times. High quality or not, 115mm of travel can absorb only so much, and the Smuggler felt undergunned on some trails.

Still, I probably flew downhill faster than on any 29er with comparable travel. And there's no way to quantify it, but I certainly had more fun. Ultimately, that's the sign of a great mashup.—JOE LINDSEY

CARBON, SCHMARBON

Yeah, Transition made a carbon mountain bike once. But its 2015 line is 100 percent aluminum.



SANTA CRUZ 5010 C R

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friend of mine is a mechanical engineer who designs industrial boilers, and he seems to derive as much joy from crunching numbers as he does from smashing through rock gardens. Scott is particularly obsessive about his gear. Prior to purchasing a new bike, he spent months researching suspension designs, frame weights, and wheel sizes. Confident he found the right match, he dropped nearly \$7K on a 5010.

It's a seriously sweet ride: RockShox Pike fork and Reverb dropper seatpost, slick-shifting SRAM X01 single-ring drivetrain, hyperlight carbon frame, 27.5-inch wheels. It has 125mm of rear travel and weighs 26 pounds—the type of numbers that override Scott's most analytical impulses with dreams of ripping between refugios in the Dolomites, Chianti sloshing in his CamelBak.

But \$7K? The dude practically had to borrow from his retirement fund to pay for it. That might explain why he was shaken a few weeks ago after we dove into the Boulder Trail. He bobbled on a gap between the stones and I veered around him. He wasn't bothered that I passed him—we often leapfrog each other. What got to him was the fact that I was testing a version of his bike that cost half as much, and was keeping up just fine—though likely working harder—an outcome that his data analysis hadn't predicted.







My bike, the \$3,600 5010 C R (the R refers to the component package), had less-expensive parts than his—a Rock-Shox Sektor fork and Shimano Deore brakes-and it lacked a dropper seatpost. The frames were different, too. Santa Cruz offers two carbon options: the premium CC, which Scott owns, and the lower-cost C, which I was testing. Both come with the same suspension design and use identical frame angles. Santa Cruz claims the two versions are equally stiff, and after riding them back-to-back on punishing sections of trail, I won't disagree. But the C weighs 300 grams more and costs hundreds less (Santa Cruz doesn't sell the C frameset, so I can't say how much less, exactly).

Some brands offer full-suspension bikes in versions that use lesser grades of carbon, but those models typically have aluminum rear triangles. That was not an option for Santa Cruz, says Joe Graney, director of engineering. "We wanted the frame to be as stiff as possible to keep the handling the same as our premium frames," he said. "That's especially important as wheel sizes have gotten bigger."

Cleaving the price of a frame makes it possible for Santa Cruz to offer the 5010 C R for \$3,600—it's one of the least-expensive full-carbon suspension bikes I'm aware of. Yet it works as well as any I've ridden. A lot of credit goes to Santa Cruz's VPP suspension, which offers a solid pedaling platform with minimal sacrifice in small-bump compliance. The design turned more of my pedaling effort into forward motion, making this 29-pound model ride like it weighed less.

Additionally, the 5010's geometry made the bike easy to control. From the same stance, I could lift the front wheel over a log, whip the rear end around to slash the round belly off a corner, or wiggle through craggy rocks. The stout frame, likely aided by the carbon rear

AKA

The 5010 began life as the Solo, but another brand owns that trademark, so Santa Cruz went with 5010—the visual similarity of the characters might make cryptographers and fans of wordplay smile.

end, lent to the bike's agility.

Because Santa Cruz chose rugged components instead of light ones, I never felt outgunned on rough trails. The 130mm RockShox Sektor fork resisted twisting, and Shimano's Deore disc brakes stopped me as quickly as more expensive versions. The SRAM 2x10 crankset comes with an easy-spinning 22-tooth small chainring that made stupid-steep pitches less painful. Sometimes on smooth climbs I wished for lighter tires, but everywhere else, I appreciated having the rugged Maxxis High Roller in the front and the Ardent in the rear.

If I could drop \$7K on a bike without invoking sustained ire from my family, I would—who wouldn't? But those of us who can only dream of bikes like my friend's 26-pound 5010 CC should check out the remarkably capable C version. And the cost savings might bring those dreams of shredding in Italy closer to happening.—LOUIS MAZZANTE



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knew that with its 5.5 inches of travel, the Liv Intrigue 1 would probably be fun on descents. But I'm a cross-country racer at heart. I want to climb fast, and I didn't expect to get much help to the top from the aluminum-frame Intrigue, which felt heftier than the shorter-travel race bikes I'm used to. Spoiler alert: Halfway up the hill, I was blown away. By the end of the ride, I was hooked on going up as well as down the mountain on this bike.

The key lies in a smart build. Right now fewer women buy 5.5-inch-travel mountain bikes than men, and carbon molds are expensive. And because Liv (Giant's women's brand) doubted it would sell enough Intrigues to offset the cost of carbon fiber molds, the company got creative. It paired a more economical aluminum frame with fast and light house-brand carbon wheels that counter the extra weight of the aluminum frame. And it worked. I shot forward when I threw down on the pedals.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- → ALUMINUM FRAME, CARBON HOOPS
- → SIZES XS THROUGH M → ASCENDS LIKE
- AN ANGEL DESCENDS LIKE A BAT OUT OF HELL
- → DROPPER POST + 5.5 INCHES OF TRAVEL =
- CONFIDENCE → PAINT JOB THAT SAYS, "YEAH,
- I'M A GIRL. A BADASS ONE." → IF IT'S GOOD
- ENOUGH FOR KELLI EMMETT... → 27.5 LB (S)

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Liv worked with Kelli Emmett, twotime Downieville All-Mountain World Champion, to develop the bike, and her influence shows in its descending prowess. "We wanted this bike to be up for handling trails like the ones you find in the US enduro series, and super stable, for taking aggressive lines and cornering fast and hard," says Janette Sherman, Liv's global communications manager. "It's made for the woman who wants to really go for it."

Go for it I did. I descend fast for a cross-country girl, but you'll never hear me talk about hucking or sending it over anything. On the Intrigue, however, I found myself launching off of small jumps without hesitation. Compared with bikes I've tested in the past, the Intrigue marries a relatively tall head

tube (4.1 inches on the size small I tested) with a 68-degree head angle and a short, 22-inch top tube, creating a compact frame design that's easy to pop over foot-tall logs going up and loft over drop-offs on the way down.

The Intrigue has a lower bottom bracket (13.1 inches) than similar trail bikes, keeping the rider's center of gravity closer to the ground; longer-thanaverage 17.6-inch chainstays help keep the bike stable when it's charging at high speeds. But I was still able to flick through tight turns quickly and easily, thanks in part to the 27.5-inch wheels.

Giant's Maestro suspension system delivered a harmonious ride even on trails that are notorious for having no rhythm. I could keep my speed as I flowed through scattered boulders,

RAWR What's the Intrigue's spirit animal? Sherman says, "We all agreed a tiger."

babyheads, and stuttery roots as the shock absorbed the cacophony of uneven hits without wallowing or kicking back. Because the suspension stays active even when I brake hard, I didn't have a single whiteknuckle moment, even on the loosest, steepest terrain.

I actually found myself considering racing enduro more often, as I calmly let go of the brakes down a steep, washed-out chute that usually gets my heart pumping from adrenaline. On one 30-mile group ride, I was able to keep contact with some of the guys who usually drop me on the downhills—without feeling outside my comfort zone. And at slower speeds, the Intrigue moved rhythmically through tricky terrain in response to just the slightest body English—though with the lower bottom bracket, I did need to do a little more pedal ratcheting and be more mindful of my timing to avoid rock strikes. (A few still happened.)

The Intrigue 1 is outfitted with quality parts: Avid Guide R hydraulic disc brakes with 160mm rotors, a SRAM 36/22 double crankset, and an 11x36, 10-speed cassette. The Schwalbe Nobby Nic SnakeSkin tires are grippy and durable, and the women's Fiz'ik Donna saddle is a comfortable perch. Giant's Contact dropper seatpost provided an extra boost of confidence when the incline turned practically vertical.

Even after nearly 200 miles, I still get giddy every time I pull this bike out of the garage. The Intrigue is proof that although companies may still have to make compromises on women's bikes for economic reasons, smart workarounds mean they don't have to sacrifice performance. And if more women get on bikes like this, there will soon be a demand for those carbon molds. In the meantime, I'm psyched to see Liv roll out a capable trail bike that feels faster than most at this price.—SELENE YEAGER







fast and rough trail—not typical fat-bike territory—and I launched off the top of a seven-foot-high rise. That jump comes after a loose, off-camber turn that slows me down, so I usually have to work hard to get off the ground. But on this day, it felt easy. Something was different.

So I tried it again. When I laid the Bucksaw hard into the turn before

So I tried it again. When I laid the Bucksaw hard into the turn before the jump, I noticed that the extra traction provided by the fat tires allowed me to brake later and corner harder than on any other bike I've ridden. Carrying even more speed than last time, I hucked it so far that my helmet hit a tree branch. As I pulled pine needles out of my visor, hair standing on end, it hit me: This is not a typical fat bike.

Salsa developed the Bucksaw to shred primarily on normal trails, not just to float over snow and sand. Its 100mm-travel Split Pivot suspension system is the same as that found on Salsa's Horsethief and Spearfish trail bikes. And while the rest of the industry is going

TIPPING POINT

With all the improvements to this category of bike, and brands like Trek and Specialized now in the game, we're calling it: This is the year that fat bikes go mainstream.

wider on rims, Salsa went the other direction, for weight savings and better handling on hard surfaces. The bike is built with 3.8-inch Surly Nate tires and 65mm-wide Surly Marge Lite rims that are narrower than most in their category, though still about twice as wide as those on conventional bikes.

THAT FEELS LIKE MORE → EXCELS ON ROUGH AND TECHNICAL TRAILS → 33.6 LB (L)

The suspension and squish from the fat tires makes the Bucksaw feel like it has 120mm or more of travel. The bike transformed descents with drops and ledges into cakewalks, and I mowed over fist- to head-size rocks that I usually have to pay careful attention to. I even cleaned technical climbs I often have to walk.

I ventured on bigger rides on the Bucksaw, searching for its limits. I found a few. The bike's 33.6 pounds checked my climbing speed. SRAM's 1x11 group

is fantastic, but the traction provided by the big tires allowed the bike to climb very steep pitches that my legs couldn't actually sustain for very long; I'd prefer a double-chainring setup. And although the Bucksaw performs way better on soft surfaces than a regular mountain bike, its narrower tires don't float across sand or snow as easily as those on a traditional fat bike, which are 4.5 to 5 inches wide.

Still, this unusual model surprised me. Until now, I thought fat bikes were good only on snow and sand. The Bucksaw fills a gap between normal mountain bikes and fat bikes—one that I didn't know existed before this. It turns out to be a sweet spot, but to understand why, you need to ride this bike. Just don't be surprised if it gives you goosebumps in July.—RON KOCH

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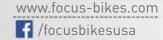
Caliper: 860g

Head Tube Stiffness: 100 Nm/o
Bottom Bracket Stiffness: 62 N/mn

On average over all sizes



AWARD 2014







WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ SPLIT WHEEL SIZING: XS

AND S GET 27.5-INCH

WHEELS; M, L, AND XL ARE

29ERS → LIGHT ENOUGH

TO RACE CROSS-COUNTRY;

MORE THAN CAPABLE

ON THE TRAIL → 120MM

TRAVEL IN FRONT AND

102MM IN THE REAR →

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hat is this bike for? I asked myself that question several times while riding the ASR C. At first I obsessed about what it wasn't. With more relaxed handling and a softer suspension tune than a typical 102mm-travel cross-country bike, the ASR C lacks the speed and sharpness of a race bike like the Specialized Epic. But it has less travel and a less robust frame than a trail bike.

Then I began to think about what it is: light, quick, and capable. It's a bike that's surprisingly versatile; fast enough for semi-serious cross-country racing but also with enough stability and wheel travel so you can savor—not just endure—the descents.

This is one of those bikes that feels like it has more travel than it

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does, which is advantageous, just not while grinding uphill. Rather, the ASR C climbs well because it's light—Yeti claims just 4.2 pounds for the frameand because I engaged the Fox shock's climb mode while I was pedaling. On steeper ascents, the front end required more of my attention to keep it from wandering. But rear-wheel traction is good, and even in climb mode, the suspension is supple enough so that square-edge bumps didn't eject me from the saddle. The bottom bracket is low, so I had to be careful not to strike my pedals.

On the other side of the peak, the sensitive rear suspension and 120mm fork paid off. The ASR C charged harder on the downhills than it had a right to, aided not just by the suspension but also by the relaxed, 69.1-degree head angle (68 degrees on smaller sizes) and low bottom bracket that had been, perhaps, liabilities on the climb, but now offered stability. It felt as fast on demanding trails as some longer-travel bikes, but different. Instead of plowing

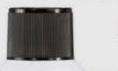
technical descents at our local bike park. It absorbed my landings off small drops with a plushness that belied its 102mm of rearwheel travel. It encouraged me to spring over small rollers on fast straightaways, mentally squealing, Whee!

On climbs, the 27,5-inch wheels provided assistance in getting over obstacles. And when I was slowly picking my way through rock gardens, the bike felt more nimble and maneuverable than the 29ers I've ridden. It was easy to move my weight around—though it usually takes me a few rides to adapt to most bikes, I felt immediately in control on the ASR C.

On smooth terrain, the 27,5-inch wheels lacked the rolling efficiency of 29ers. But overall, I am fastest when I'm comfortable, and that was 100 percent true for me on this bike. Perhaps most telling was this: For a couple of weeks, I had the ASR C and a superlight, short-travel 29er in my basement. When I rode with a faster group, I chose the ASR C every time—27,5-inch wheels and all.—Gloria Liu



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THE ASR C CHARGED HARDER ON THE DOWNHILLS THAN IT HAD A RIGHT TO, AIDED NOT JUST BY THE SUSPENSION BUT ALSO BY A RELAXED HEAD ANGLE AND LOW BOTTOM BRACKET.



over obstacles, I could float the lightweight ASR C over most hazards, juking around others. And the svelte frame was impressively stiff, able to handle a good flogging. When I pushed the bike to its limits, however, I wished for a little more midstroke support in the shock, as it occasionally sank too deep into its travel too easily.

I like how the 29er wheels rolled and maintained my momentum over rocks on this 102mm platform. They made the bike feel fast and efficient. And Yeti eliminated most of my pet peeves relating to other 29-inch-wheel bikes. The ASR C is light, lively, and stiff, and the head tube is short so I can get the bar low. The handling is balanced so that the bike is capable on descents, but not ponderous when riding through technical terrain.

Better than the question, "What is this bike for?" is, "Who is this bike for?" The ASR C is for the rider who likes a light and quick-feeling bike that's livelier than a trail bike but more playful—and more capable on tough descents—than the average cross-country bike. It's for riders who worry less about definitions and more about having a damn good time.—MATT PHILLIPS







Champions in Pursuit Colavita | Bianchi Pro Women gear up for 2015





ABOVE: Team members pictured left to right: Amanda Shission (soigneur), Mary Zider, Kathryn Donovan, Whitney Schultz, Jessica Cutler, Erica Allar, Jessica Prinner, Morgan Brown, Andrea Smith (mechanic) LEFT: Erica Allar

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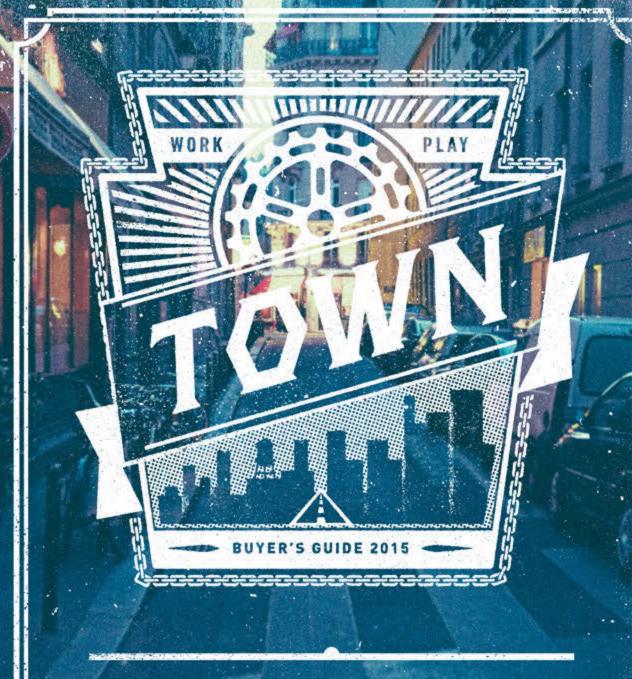
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW → A BIKE THAT WANTS TO REPLACE A CAR, AND PROBABLY CAN → BOSCH PREMIUM MOTOR IS POWERFUL AND EASY TO OPERATE → WILL BEAT A PRO RACER TO THE TOP OF A HILL → HANDLES WELL FOR ITS SIZE AND WEIGHT, BUT MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR POPULAR MULTIUSE PATHS → 67.2 LB (ONE SIZE), WITH CARGO BAGS, PORTERRACK, AND PORTERBAG Photography by Scott Griggs



XTRACYCLE EDGERUNNER 10E

TO THE MALL, AND BEYOND!

PRICE \$5,599 as tested

outclimbed a world champion. On a 67-pound, long-tail cargo bike,

Dressed in khakis and a down puffy, wearing my weathered Blundstone boots, I turned right onto North College Drive and pedaled the o.8-mile-long, 5.6 percent-grade Strava segment at a 16 mph average, completing it in three minutes and hardly breaking a sweat. That was 25 seconds faster than the time posted by legendary Ned Overend, Mountain Bike Hall of Famer and 1990 World Champion.

I was on an Xtracycle EdgeRunner 10E, and this is the power of the 250-watt Bosch electric-assist system built into the bike's frame. (For the Strava purists: Afterward, I deleted the ride and restored the leader-board.) In its most powerful mode, turbo, the system helps push the 10E up to 20 mph in a few pedal strokes. Then it cuts out, in order to meet regulatory requirements—lest the US government consider the 10E a motorcycle (shake fist). And while it is fun—really fun—to haul ass up

hills on this bike, that's not the point.

The \$5,000 10E is supposed to replace a car, says Xtracycle. And in a lot of ways, it can. Cargo capacity is 400 pounds (rider and cargo combined) with an additional 17.6 pounds if you get the optional tubular front rack (\$199). The secure center stand holds the bike upright while you load it, and prevents it from tipping even if the load is imbalanced.

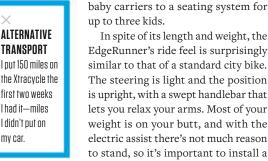
My test bike was also equipped with a pair of 35-liter Carry All Cargo Bags (\$250 a pair) and a PorterPack front bag (\$150) about the size of a case of beer. Get creative with some straps and bungee cords, and you can carry a huge load with this setup—like the blender, side table, and other odds and ends I picked up at the mall one Saturday. Other accessories are available: Xtracycle offers a wheeled sidecar that provides a low-riding, flat deck that can handle an additional 250 pounds and folds up when not in use. And there are a number of family-friendly add-ons, from

up to three kids.

In spite of its length and weight, the EdgeRunner's ride feel is surprisingly similar to that of a standard city bike. The steering is light and the position is upright, with a swept handlebar that lets you relax your arms. Most of your weight is on your butt, and with the electric assist there's not much reason to stand, so it's important to install a seat you love.

But this is a big bike. It's heavy and long. And with the Bosch motor, it's fast, too. Fast enough that I felt uncomfortable bombing through town on the popular multiuse path. The Shimano Deore hydraulic disc brakes are good, and the bike is surprisingly quick- and sure-handling, but I couldn't shake the feeling that a bike that's 67 pounds, a couple feet wide, seven feet long, and capable of flitting along at 20 mph doesn't pair well with joggers, elderly people on a stroll, and little kids on push bikes. After a few runs on the path, I found it best to keep the Xtracycle on the roads—it is meant to replace a car, after all. I felt like drivers gave me more respect and space than they typically do when I am on a standard bike, possibly because of the 10E's size and ability to trot along at a good clip.

The Bosch system blends cleanly into the frame, replacing the traditional bottom-bracket shell with an integrated motor and crank. It's the slickestoperating assist I've used. Just turn it on and pedal. The motor adds, depending on selected mode, a 50 to 275 percent boost to the power you generate. It also reduces power briefly when you change gears, to avoid shifting under load. I wish the motor operated a little smoother—there's a brief lag before the power kicks in, and when it does it comes on quickly. You feel a similarly abrupt change when you hit 20mph and the power cuts off. This makes the 10E feel jerky sometimes, especially when stopping, starting, attempting to negotiate tight spaces, and conducting







slower-speed maneuvers—especially in turbo mode.

A multifunction handlebar display lets you select the assist mode and see how many miles are remaining on the charge. Though Xtracycle provides a claimed range—20 to 100 miles, depending on assist level and conditions-actual mileage off a single charge varies significantly based on how much weight you're carrying, how hilly your area is, and even the air temperature. I got in about 20 miles of start-and-stop errand running in turbo mode on fairly flat terrain, on a 40-degree day, while carrying an extremely heavy load. Recharging a fully drained battery takes about three and half hours.

Bosch provides a two-year warranty on the battery and motor. When asked about the battery's lifespan, Jonathan Weinert of Bosch USA said, "[It] has the potential to last years beyond that, albeit with gradual loss of capacity just like your cell phone battery. It depends how the battery is cared for. Exposure or storage in extreme cold or heat can shorten its life." When the battery does die, a replacement is currently \$933 a potential future expense to keep in mind. The motor has no regular service requirements.

Can the 10E replace a car? I think so, especially if the idea is to turn an urban, two-car family into a one-car household. On the 10E, I could tackle almost all of those little errands that weren't usually possible by bike because of time, distance, or cargo space—often literally without breaking a sweat. I hauled bikes to the shop, picked up some new furniture, and loaded a week's worth of groceries onto the bike. It couldn't replace all of my car's functions, but it replaced a lot more than I'd expected. And for many shorter trips, riding the 10E was actually easier and faster. After I had to give it back, I often found myself driving my car and thinking, I could've done this on the Xtracycle.—MATT PHILLIPS



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BREEZER BELTWAY ELITE

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PRICE \$1,619

ere's a complaint that doesn't get lodged very often: My commute is too short. It took me roughly five minutes to get to work on the Breezer Beltway Elite this morning, and despite enough sideways December sleet to feel like I was being subjected to a nonconsensual Polar Plunge, I wouldn't have minded a few more miles of riding—just to get a few more minutes with the bike.

The Beltway won our 2013 Editors' Choice award for Best Urban Bike, and with good reason—it's a smooth-shifting ride loaded with commute-enhancing features, such as a lightweight aluminum frame, Shimano's slick Alfine 8-speed internally geared hub, a Gates belt drive, and powerful disc brakes. Breezer also piled on the extras, like dynamo-powered lights, comfortable Ergon grips, a rack, fenders, kickstand, and bell—pretty much everything you could want except for heated seats and a radio.

The term "urban cycling" often evokes visions of hipsters on fixies, but let's be real—that isn't the Beltway's personality. This bike won't wear tight pants anywhere, it won't enjoy things ironically, and it certainly won't drop out of school to "focus on its art." It is built for everyday commuters who choose







European bike brands have already figured out a few things we're still puzzling over here in the US. For one: More people will ride, and ride more, when riding is made easier—by increasing the number of safe routes, and by simplifying maintenance.

That's why belt drives, like the Gates Carbon Drive, are already hugely popular in countries like Germany and the Netherlands, which have strong commuter cultures and no-nonsense approaches to bike maintenance. Lighter, cleaner, and stronger than a chain, the Gates system looks like a mini tank tread and feels about as powerful. The belt is embedded with carbon fiber cords that won't stretch, and it requires no lube—wash it off anytime it gets grimy, and say good-bye to greasy chainmarks on your jeans. We predict that in the US more and more urban bikes will be built with belt drives, with Gates being the current leading system.—C.G.



function over style, don't want to waste time on constant maintenance, and want to pedal between points A and B with as little fuss as possible.

That said, the Beltway should appeal to more than buttoned-up legal aides and DMV clerks, because it's a really fun bike to rip around on. It is unexpectedly light considering all the extras, and the shifting happens so immediately that it feels like the bike can anticipate your gearing needs. On the Beltway, I often looked for detours and took the long way home. Once, I veered off my one-mile morning commute and took a self-guided tour of the neighborhood Christmas lights, followed by a visit to my town's farthest coffee shop. I swear I eventually made it to work.

Sometimes it's not about having the hippest ride on the block. Sometimes I just want to ride somewhere and not worry about whether I brought my lights, what to do if it starts raining, or how I'm going to tote a 36-pack of beer home (maybe it's PBR, maybe it's not). The Beltway has me covered in almost any situation. And it makes my commute more enjoyable, especially on the days I take the long way in.—CAITLIN GIDDINGS





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mooth. That's the word I keep thinking whenever I ride the Strada. It's the one word that can almost capture the bike's over-the-top comfort, oh-sopleasant ride, and the way it seems to make having fun easy. This is Bianchi's first multispeed, flat-bar road bike with 700c tires, and the company is excited. "It's a model we've needed for quite a while," says David Reed, VP of marketing and communications. "We've had other versions in different tire sizes and different speeds, but never one like this."

So what is "this?" This is a bike that not only feels at home rolling through a neighborhood park, but also seamlessly flows with traffic. It's a bike that wants to get a little dirty, run errands around town, remind your dad that bikes are still fun, tempt you to go farther, take you to the office and back, or encourage a new rider to join an organized group ride.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Strada is the Italian word for street, and represents the romantic idea of riding around town with no particular place to be.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ EYELETS FOR REAR RACK, FRONT RACK, AND FENDERS → DOUBLE-BUTTED CRO-MO FRAME WITH CLEARANCE FOR UP TO 38MM TIRES → SHIMANO CLARIS 8-SPEED, 11-32 CASSETTE; FSA TEMPO 50/34 COMPACT CRANK → DURABLE, LONG-DISTANCE VITTORIA RANDONNEUR TIRES WITH REFLECTIVE SIDEWALLS → 25.8 LB (53CM)

It has eyelets for mounting fenders for all-weather riding, plus accommodations to hold rear and front racks if you plan to carry cargo. For those longdistance excursions that might creep into dusk, the Vittoria Randonneur 28mm tires are extra durable to keep flats to a minimum and have reflective sidewalls to maximize visibility. And if you're the kind of rider who might overstuff a set of panniers, the geometry will suit you: Long chainstays help with stability and put the rear wheel farther away from the crankset, meaning you can hang the most oversize panniers on the rear rack without them ever getting in the way of your feet. The alloy riser bar and ergonomic grips, which allow

you to comfortably ride in an upright position, and the intuitive dual-control shifters and sharp-shifting Shimano Claris 8-speed drivetrain are ideal for all levels of cyclists. Yet the Strada is up for challenges, too: I took it on our local 'cross course just for fun, and it never held me back. The bike shares the same double-butted chromoly tubing (and clearance for up to 38mm tires) as Bianchi's best-selling cyclocross bike, the Volpe.

Reed says that the Strada will be a big hit for the city. I agree, but I think the Strada has even wider appealit's a bike on which almost every kind of rider can find his or her own type of straightforward fun.-JEN SHERRY

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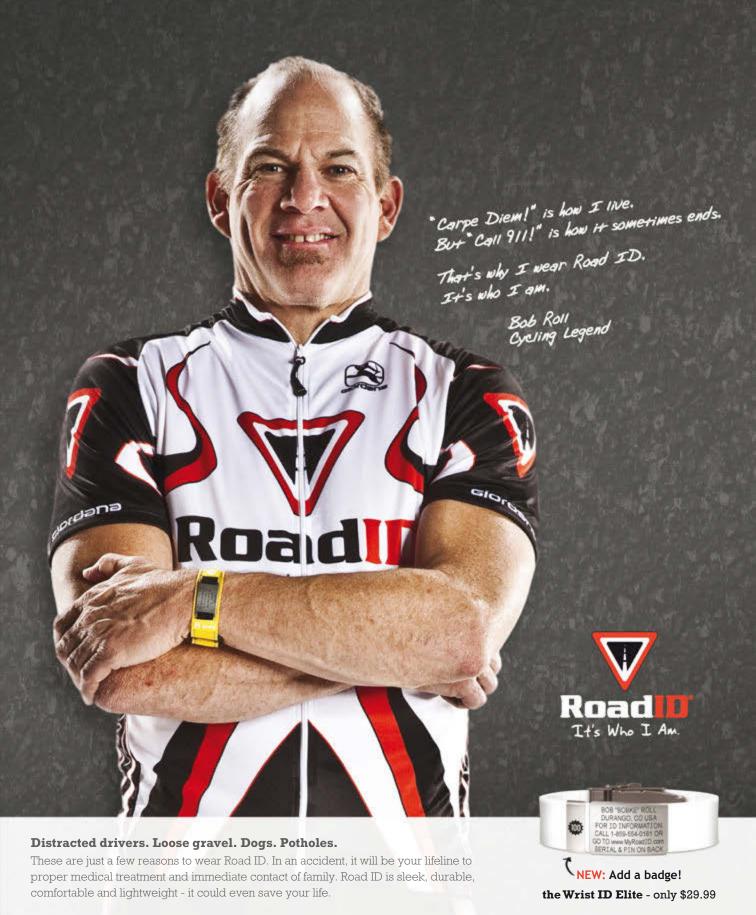
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

→ BMX + CRUISER = RAD → SINGLESPEED (36/18) THAT
CAN HAUL ASS → MECHANICAL DISC BRAKES → AVAILABLE IN AQUA AND RED → 29.3 LB (16 IN)

the rider in an upright and relaxed position. The BMX heritage shows up in the 30.7-inch-wide handlebar and the double top tube, giving the bike an edgy, retro vibe that makes it stand out in a sea of flatbar townies.

And this bike is definitely capable of more than a ride along the boardwalk—or a tipsy roll home from happy hour. Kona chief designer Doug LaFavor says that the Humuhumu is designed to be a speedy utility commuter, and the bike's affinity for velocity

was apparent from the first pedal stroke. I assumed that, with just a single gear, I'd be grinding along—but I was pleasantly surprised on my initial ride home. The 36-tooth chainring coupled with the 18-tooth freewheel gave me a big enough gear that I could get going on my relatively flat commute to and from work, without ever feeling as if I was spinning out or pushing too hard. (For those who live in a hillier area, the gear is fairly easy to swap.) The ride was stable and comfortable thanks to a











Lexus kicks off the 2015 cycling season with Michael Chiarello's Bottega Gran Fondo in Yountville, CA on April 25 & 26, 2015. For more information, please visit bottegagranfondo.com













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CATCHY Humuhumu is short for Humuhumunukunukunukuapua`a, the state fish of Hawaii. It's the world's longest name for a fish, and also the longest name for a bike. Why? Kona just wanted to have the longest name in the bike industry.

wheelbase and chainstays that are longer than on other models in Kona's Freerange line, a group of go-everywhere rigs.

The Humuhumu's 29-inch wheels made it easy to hop onto curbs, roll over rough roads, and plow through some unavoidable sidewalk trash. The WTB SX 19mm-wide rims accommodate Schwalbe's Big Apple 50c tires to provide a smooth and fast ride. The Tektro Novela mechanical disc brakes made quick and effective braking a breeze—they stopped me just in time to avoid a child who dodged into my path one day on my commute. And the bike comes with mounts on the seatstays to attach a rear rack.

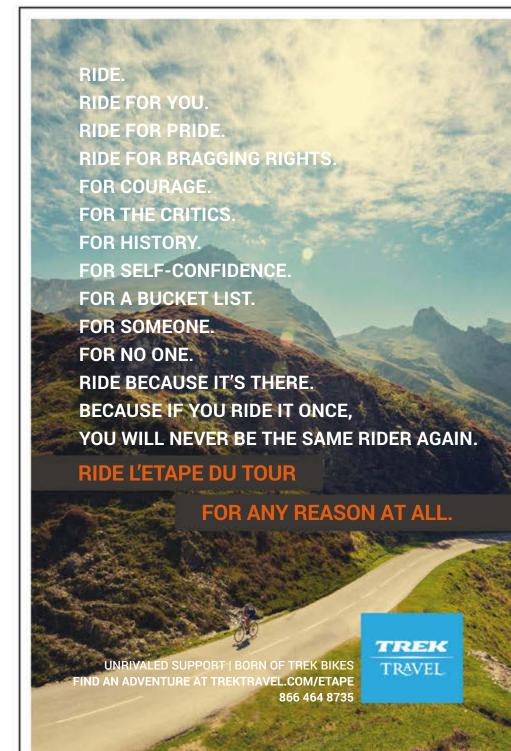
The wide handlebar did take some getting used to—I felt a little uncomfortable on my first ride, but after a few commutes, the awkwardness went away. However, squeezing the superwide bar between obstacles never got any easier. I didn't have too many objects to weave through on my wide-open ride from home to work, but if I lived in an urban area with crowded sidewalks and traffic-congested roads, I think I would have to be mindful of the bar. You could always swap it out, but LaFavor says that could impact leverage and, thus, control.

The double top tube also gives you a few options for carrying the bike, which I appreciated. I have to walk up three flights of stairs to get into my apartment, and doing that with the Humuhumu presented a bit of a challenge. It wasn't the weight—even at 29.1 pounds for my size 16-inch, the bike could easily be thrown over my shoulder. But the

IT REMINDED ME
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wide bar and 29-inch wheels made navigating staircases and narrow hallways feel claustrophic. I welcomed the extra handhold provided by the double top tube in these instances.

I love cycling, but a lot of mornings it feels easier just to hop in the car to get to work. The Humuhumu made me want to ride, even if that meant I showed up at the office with messy hair, bright red cheeks, and frozen fingers. My commute used to be a nuisance, but on this bike it turned into a part of my day that I genuinely enjoyed—and it reminded me that riding bikes should always be a little bit about goofing around.—ELSPETH HUYETT





he man walking his dog stares at me from the end of his driveway. "I've never seen anyone ride a bike up this hill so fast!" he says, shaking his head.

Part of me doesn't want to say anything. The hill isn't even that steep. But I believe in transparency.

"It has a motor!" I shout, and zip away.

This exchange didn't surprise me. E-bikes are rare enough in the US that you don't expect to see one when you're taking the dog out for a pee. And on the Easy Motion Evo Eco Lite, you have to look closely to see the 36v/9Ah lithium-ion battery hiding in the down tube and the small 350-watt motor in the rear hub.

Steve Lindenau, CEO of Easy Motion USA, tells me that the Evo Eco Lite is its best-selling bike. It's also the company's least-expensive non-folding model. And the aluminum

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bike comes with plenty of built-in utility, including a rear rack, head- and taillights, a kickstand, and a chain guard. With 21 gears, four levels of pedal assist, and a throttle function that powers you along even if you're not moving your legs, it's versatile enough for almost any excursion.

It certainly made easy work of my test rides around town. E-bikes are heavy, and this one is no exception. But riding with the assist made the bike feel sprightly—it hit well over 20 mph in its highest mode (the motor cuts out after that speed, Lindenau says, though I didn't perceive any change when it did—possibly due to momentum).

Despite the extra weight, the bike felt stable and balanced, swooping around corners and flying down hills. And it had no problem on rough terrain. When I plowed through a snow-covered alley, the wide, grippy tires kept me from slipping. During a spontaneous detour onto a local cyclocross course, I was able to negotiate tight turns on dirt, and the fenders kept me mud-free. A minor complaint: The brakes were adequate, but I would have liked more-robust stopping power.

To regulate the assist, simply press the up or down buttons on the bar-mounted LCD display. The removable unit also shows speed, distance traveled, and battery charge. Lindenau says you'll get up to 50 miles from a charge depending on your weight, tire pressure, weather, and terrain—plenty for most commutes.

Just for kicks, I rode the Evo Eco Lite up a local, one-mile climb with an 8 percent average grade. In the highest assist mode, I traveled roughly three times as fast as

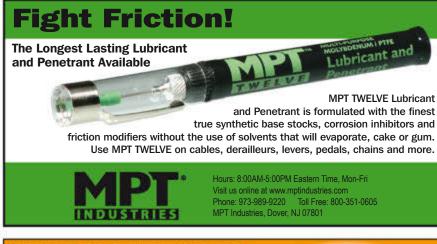
I normally do on my road bike. I still had to work, but not nearly as hard as usual. And it did drain the fully charged battery by about one bar (out of five).

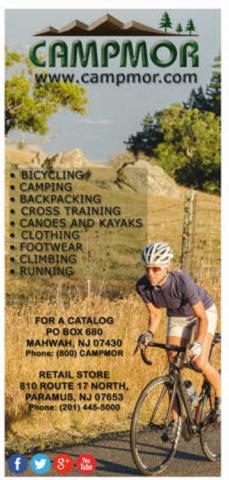
Most people say it's too early to tell if the US will adopt e-bikes in a big way. But if all of them can be as fun and user-friendly as the Evo Eco Lite, my bet is that pretty soon your average dog walker won't look twice at cyclists zipping by in record time.—LEAH FLICKINGER

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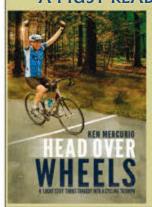








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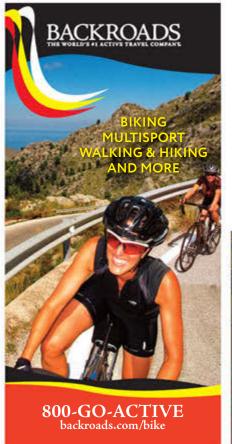
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CO₂ cartridge □	⊠ Pump
Chase □	☐ Escape ⁸
Grace 🗾	□ Power
Heart 🙀	□ Legs
Interval □	Session

1. I'm still pretty new to cycling, so I'm the worst person to ask about cycling tech or anything like that. But I see all these guys with beer guts counting grams on their bike. 2. I started brewing when I lived in New York City and went to a Bed, Bath, and Beyond, and saw a Mr. Beer kit. I started home brewing every day, and decided that's what I want to do. 3. What does that even mean? It's all about this. 4. Warranty you send away. Service is local. There's only a few people I see more frequently than family, and it's the guys fixing bikes at my local shop, South Mountain Cycle. 5. That's when you really find out what's inside of you. My favorite part of climbing is trying to beat my friend, Josh West, up the hills—make sure you put that in there. 6. A growler is too much beer. I make beef stew with the second half of mine when I bring it home. 7. Even though I was alone when I got hit by a car recently. An elderly lady with the sun in her eyes rearended me then dragged me along a parked car. I have herniated and bulging discs, and my leg is messed up—and my bike blew up. That wreck is actually the reason I'm getting a new bike. 8. In my first crit, I tried to escape early, and I was like 'I am gonna win this!' At the end, little girls with braces were passing me. But that hasn't stopped me from always trying to get away.



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